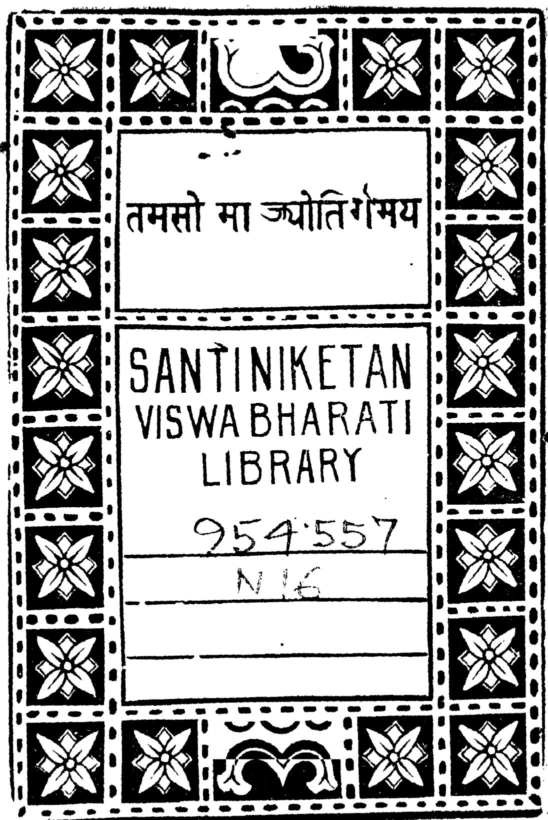

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SOCIALISM AND THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

BY

ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA

EDITED BY

YUSUF MEHERALLY



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SOCIALISM AND THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION

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FOREWORD

THE Congress Session is meeting in the home province of Acharya Narendra Deva at Meerut. It is in the fitness of things that the first representative collection of his important speeches and writings should be published on this occasion.

Our freedom movement has passed through a fiery ordeal since the last plenary session of the Congress met in March 1940 at Ramgarh. Nearly four out of these six years of storm and stress Narendra Devaji spent in prison. His health always fragile, received a setback in consequence, the full extent of which his friends have been reluctant to acknowledge even to themselves. For the best part of a year now, illness has robbed the country of his day-to-day guidance and leadership. And when one remembers the eminent place he occupies both in the political life of his province and the country, both within the Congress organisation and the socialist and other associated movements, the loss is easily measured. Those, therefore, who have been awaiting his return to active public life will welcome this book all the more.

The title of the book *Socialism And The National Revolution* just describes its contents. Socialist ideas have now found a large measure of acceptance in the Congress and the country. But twelve years ago when the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934, the pattern was not so clear. What should be the role of socialists in a country like India, struggling for freedom from foreign rule? What should be the relationship between the forces of the National Revolution and those of the Social Revolution? Answers to these and other similar questions were not only of theoretical but also of great practical importance to the country and to the Socialists, who were all ardent and devoted Congressmen and many of them had spent almost

all the years of their political life, in the struggle of the people under Congress leadership.

The pages that follow throw light on the tactics of the Congress Socialist Party as seen through the pronouncements of one of its principal spokesmen. While strictly following the discipline of the Congress even where they were overruled, which was often, the Congress Socialists sought to put the impress of a vital and vigorous anti-imperialist programme on the national movement, as typified by the Congress. Their contribution may or may not have been adequate, but they at least, strove sincerely while maintaining national unity to broaden the base of the Congress and to direct its energies on to what seemed to them a truly revolutionary path, in the fight against foreign rule and exploitation nearer home. Besides in all the trials and tribulations of the years, through days of illegality, prison and worse, their loyalty to the Congress has remained unshakable.

Because of his indifferent health, I have hesistated to trouble Acharyaji with the details of publication. In fact, if his own wishes had been allowed to prevail, the book would not have seen the light of the day at all. The responsibility for the selection and arrangement of material as well as for any defects in it is therefore, entirely mine.

My best thanks are due to B. H. Bhukhanwala and Pinakin Patel for assistance in the preparation and publication of the volume.

14th November, 1946. YUSUF MEHERALLY

ADDENDA

Page	Line	Read As	Instead of
vii	3	To-day he is 57.	To-day is his 57.
65	1	I am not indulging	I am indulging

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ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA

By **YUSUF MEHERALLY**

BY common consent Acharya Narendra Deva is the doyen of the Indian Socialists. In a party of youth, he is the one senior. To-day is his 57.

For several years he has been a front ranker in the twin fields of scholarship and politics—a rare combination. Turning his back on a promising legal career and the comforts of a palatial home, he plunged headlong into active politics in the exciting days of the Non-Co-operation Movement. In its wake, the campaign for National Education gathered fresh strength. When Kashi Vidyapith was founded in Benares in 1921, Narendra Deva was invited to join its staff. Five years later in 1926 he became its Principal. His active association with that august institution has continued since then, over a quarter of a century.

For a great scholar of his reputation his literary output has been small. Indeed, very few know how much the cause of historical research in India lost, when a certain youth, torn between two conflicting impulses, decided on politics instead of an exclusively academic life. Narendra Deva's father Babu Baldev Prasad, who was a well-known lawyer, was naturally keen that his gifted son should follow in his foot-steps and inherit his practice and influential legal connections. Narendra Dava himself seemed once anxious to become an archaeologist and actually joined the Queen's College at Benares, which was the only educational Institution in U.P. at the time, offering courses in epigraphy, paleography and numismatics. But when he took his Master's degree in 1913 he decided that the seclusion of the scholar was not for him. He noted that most of the active politicians were lawyers, and decided upon a legal career. As soon as he had completed his course he returned to Fyzabad in 1915 and he took up the secretaryship of the local Home Rule League.

From a very young age he had developed an attraction for politics. When only ten years old, he had attended in 1899 the session of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow with his father, who was a delegate. Romesh Chandra Dutt was the President. Side by side, the All-India Social Conference was also meeting, under the distinguished presidentship of Ranade. But for Narendra Deva the hero was Tilak, just released from the Yeravda Central Prison. The proceedings were in English and he understood nothing, but he sat glued to the spot. This was his first glimpse of Tilak, for whom he developed a great affection.

During his high school days the political horizon was filled with the agitation against the Partition of Bengal. There was great excitement among the student community all over India and passionate sympathy for that province. Narendra Deva who was only seventeen attended the Calcutta Congress in 1906 as a visitor. It was at this session that Dadabhoy Naoroji from the chair, described the goal of India as *Swaraj*, a word that has since passed into the consciousness of the nation and has become a magic expression, symbolising its will to freedom.

The tussle between the Moderates led by Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, Gokhale and Surendranath Banerji and the Extremists (Nationalists) led by Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh was at its height. The great personality of the President helped to keep the two wings in the Congress together on an agreed programme, which increasingly reflected the influence of the Left.

In Calcutta, Narendra Deva heard some of the big guns of the Extremists, particularly Aurobindo Ghosh and Bepin Chandra Pal. He was present when Aurobindo's famous address "Tenets of the New Party" was delivered. The following year, the Congress met at Surat and broke up as a result of the acute differences between the two sections. The extremists were expelled from the Congress and the Moderates went their lonely way.

Allahabad during Narendra Deva's under-graduate days was one of the strongholds of the Nationalist Party, des-

pite the fact that it was the headquarters of three great veteran leaders of the Moderates—Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru and Munshi Ishwar Saran. When Tilak paid a visit to the town in 1907, none of these eminent leaders troubled to go to receive him. The students were, of course, there at the station in their hundreds. Babu Charu Chandra Chatterji was the only one in Allahabad found willing to lend his carriage for Tilak's reception. The students unyoked the horses and insisted on dragging the vehicle themselves, till the great leader intervened and asked them to preserve thir enthusiasm for a better cause. Narendra Deva was one of the leading figures in the student demonstrations.

The Muir College Hostel at Allahabad where Narendra Deva was putting up was a hot-bed of political unrest. Instead of burning the midnight oil pouring over their college text-books, the students indulged in long discussions about the political future of the country. The expulsion of the Extremists from the Congress had lost to that body a tremendous amount of popular support and its younger and more dynamic elements. Tilak was again sentenced to six years' imprisonment on a charge of sedition in 1908 and transported to Mandalay Jail in Burma. Aurobindo Ghosh was also locked up facing a long and protracted trial.

The orators of the Nationalist Party, among them Lala Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal, Syed Haider Raza, a fiery poet and speaker from Delhi, stumped the chief cities carrying the youth with them. At about this time, Lala Hardayal who had come under the influence of Shamji Krishna Varma in Europe, renounced his scholarhsip in England and returned to India. He prepared a Course of Study—a reading course for Indian students who wanted to prepare for political work. The books included those of Romesh Chandra Dutt, Dadabhoy Naoroji, History of India, books on a number of foreign countries and especially the writings of Mazzini. This had quite some influence on Narendra Deva.

The Extremist Party supporters were also publishing two journals in Allahabad—one *Swaraj*, an Urdu weekly, several of whose editors were jailed and another *Karmayogi* in Hindi. The latter was edited by Pandit Sunderlal, who had been expelled from the University for his political activities and therefore could not take his degree.

It was in that atmosphere that Narendra Deva lived and moved. He was a good student and read avidly whatever books of a revolutionary nature he could get hold of. Books like *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* and *Mutual Aid* by Kropotkin, *Essays in National Idealism* by A. K. Coomarswamy, writings of Aurobindo Ghosh and Hardayal, and stories of Turgenev were his favourites. *The Life of Garibaldi* and writings of Mazzini, in six volumes, including his *Duties of Man*, he eagerly devoured. Also books on the French Revolution, Bluntschelli's *Theory of the State* and a lot of Nihilist literature from Russia, where the frightful suppression of the Revolution of 1905 had invested its leaders and its people with a new hallow of romance.

It is interesting to note that among Narendra Deva's contemporaries were Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant who was in B.A. when Narendra Deva was in the First Year Arts. Dr. K. N. Katju who was doing his M.A. at the time, while Babu Shiv Prasad Gupta and Thakur Chhedilal, now President of the Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee were his class fellows and good friends.

How keenly Narendra Deva took his politics will be seen from the fact that after the expulsion of the Nationalists he did not attend the Congress session in 1910 even though it was held in Allahabad where he was studying! Sir William Wedderburn, the President made another attempt to bring the two wings of the Congress together, but without success.

It was not until 1916 that unity was re-established in the Congress. The Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League, through the joint efforts of Tilak, Gokhale, Jinnah and others was arrived at. Narendra Deva who was practising as a lawyer at Fyzabad and who

was secretary of the Home-Rule League, attended the Lucknow Congress for the first time as a delegate. Since that day till now he has attended every session of the Congress except those at Cocanada (1923) and Madras (1927) when he was badly laid up with asthma.

The Non-Co-operation Movement brought about a virtual renaissance in India. National Education received a great fillip and Shiva Prasad Gupta offered a donation of ten lakhs for founding the Kashi Vidyapith at Benares. The venerable Babu Bhagwandas, philosopher and seer became the Principal, Acharya Kripalani, Vice-Principal, and Babu Sampurnanand Professor of Philosophy. Narendra Deva who had suspended his practice after the Nagpur Congress of 1920 was now pressed by Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta, his close friend and fellow student to join the Vidyapith. It was actually Jawaharlal who persuaded him to agree.

During the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930 the Congress had called for a stringent boycott of British goods and especially of foreign cloth. Basti and Gorakhpur in U.P., were the chief centres for supplying cloth to Nepal. Babu Purushottamdas Tandon, Shiva Prasad Gupta and Acharyaji visited Basti in an effort to prevent this and in order to seal the stocks of foreign cloth. They were all arrested and sent to prison. Narendra Deva was very ill in jail and continued to be very ill after his release. During 1931, the days of the Gandhi-Irwin Truce, he virtually had severe asthma attacks almost every month and was advised to go to Puri. But despite his very weak health and the advice of his doctors, he took a leading part in the 1932 struggle and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

It was the birth of the Socialist movement that ultimately drew Narendra Deva out into the field of controversial politics. Jayaprakash had returned from America in 1929. Some time after Jayaprakash's own favourite professor came to visit India, making a special tour of National Education Institutions. He visited the Bihar Vidyapith, of which Babu Rajendra Prasad was the head.

The Principal of the Bihar Vidyapith wrote to Acharyaji who was then Principal of Kashi Vidyapith, to receive the distinguished American professor. Jayaprakash accompanied him. This is how Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash met for the first time and felt mutually attracted to each other. When Jayaprakash took charge of the Labour Research Department of the A.I.C.C., they used to meet more often and became intimate. The two together were later to associate with a number of other friends in forming the Congress Socialist Party.

In May 1934, the All-India Congress Committee met at Patna to review the situation afresh and withdraw Civil Disobedience and turn to a Parliamentary Programme. To prevent an outright drift to constitutionalism and to put a more dynamic programme before the country, a Conference of Socialist Congressmen was also convened there. Acharya Narendra Deva was called upon to preside. His masterly address created quite a stir. An All-India Congress Socialist Group was formed, with Jayaprakash as Organising Secretary. From this time onwards, Narendra Deva has been the guide, philosopher and friend of the Socialist movement in India.

In 1936 when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President of the Indian National Congress for a second time, he included Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash and Achyut Patwardhan in his Working Committee. The following year Acharyaji was elected President of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee. He also presided over the Secondary Education Reorganisation Committee, set up by the Congress Government of U.P., which produced a report highly spoken of in all quarters.

For several years past, Acharyaji had been taking a keen interest in the problems of the Indian peasant. He now set to organising them. Mohanlal Gautam, one of the most influential leaders of the peasantry in U.P. and General Secretary of Central Kisan Sangh as also Seth Damodar Swarup, another well-known revolutionary leader and Pandit Algurai Shastri, now President and General Secretary of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee, also joined

the Congress Socialist Party. On the occasion of the Second Annual Conference of the Socialists at Meerut in January 1936, a Convention of Kisan workers from all over India was also held. Out of this meeting grew the All-India Kisan Sabha. Narendra Deva has twice been elected its president—at the session held at Gaya in 1939 and at Bidaul in the Muzzafarpur District of Bihar in 1942.

He also founded *Sangharsha*, a Hindi weekly that made a hit. Its Editorial Board included besides himself, Mohanlal Gautam, Ramakant Srivastava and above all Prof. B. P. Sinha.

With the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, Narendra Deva stepped out of the sphere of provincial politics on to the all-India arena. Honours have come to him unsought. Not unoften he has gently avoided them. He has declined the Vice-Chancellorship of the Lucknow University, Ministership in his own province and more than once a seat in the Congress Working Committee.

Narendra Deva is one of our well-known authorities on Indian history. This seems natural enough, for historical memory and modern progress rub shoulders together in his home-town. Born at Sitapur, in 1889, Narendra Deva's family removed to Fyzabad when he was only two and have stayed there since. The ancient city of Ajodhya, the birth-place of Rama, with which are linked the stirring incidents of the *Ramayana* is only three miles away. Fyzabad itself was the capital of Oudh and a flourishing town, when the British annexed it. The loot of the Begums of Oudh by Warren Hastings was one of the principal charges during his Impeachment before the House of Lords and we can still read about it in the eloquent words of Burke, Fox and Sheridan and in the essay of Macaulay. Another Begum of Oudh was one of the most determined leaders of the Rebellion of 1857 and her challenging reply to Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858 takes a ranking place in our revolutionary documents. A far-sighted ruler of Oudh constructed a stately mausoleum, where a number of the Nawabs and Begums of his dynasty have found their last resting place. It is well known in Fyzabad as the Gul-Badi,

the "Garden of Roses". Today, the street on which it is situated is called the Acharya Narendra Deva Road.

Though leader of the Left, Acharyaji is respected and liked by all alike—even by his political opponents. The reason is his obliging nature and anxiety to be fair to the other person's point of view. Nor does he permit party differences to come in the way of personal relations. There is no bitterness even in his most controversial pronouncements. When he differs from you, he does so with so much grace and humility that the sting is largely taken out of it.

Acharyaji is one of the greatest orators in India. It is not easy to think of even a few names, who combine his great learning and his stately eloquence. And yet, so shy is his nature, that he did not *even once* speak in the Congress till 1934, though he had been a member of the A.I.C.C. from 1917! In 1934 also, it was the strong insistence of his Socialist friends that got him on to the platform!

He is a master of several languages. At one stage, the famous Professor Venis, whose favourite pupil he was, tried to persuade him to take up the Professorship of Sanskrit at Mayo College, in an effort to prevent him from taking up Law. At the Kashi Vidyapith he taught Pali and Prakrit among other subjects, particularly Indian History. He has translated learned philosophical texts on Buddhism from French and German. His command over Urdu and Hindi is indeed remarkable.

He has a fine sense of humour. On one occasion, the National Executive of the All-India Congress Socialist Party was discussing whether an amendment should be moved to a resolution of the Working Committee. The general consensus of opinion was that the Working Committee's resolution should be supported. One prominent member, however, kept on insisting that in order to maintain its leftist character, the C.S.P. must move an amendment. To everybody's surprise Narendra Devaji butted in, "Yes, I entirely agree with our friend. The Party was specially formed in order to move amendments to the resolutions of the Working Committee. If we fail to move an

amendment even once, we will be completely lost." There was such a burst of laughter after his remark, uttered in a serious tone that the tension was relieved and the advocate of the amendment could not bring himself to say any more!

What shall we say about his defects? In his own province some of them actually pass for virtues! The first is his inability to say 'no' to anybody and people are not slow to take advantage of this. Another is his excessive politeness. Even for U.P. the traditional home of elegance and refinement, where a cultured person takes almost as many minutes to say an 'unpleasant' thing, as a normal person in Bombay takes seconds, his courtesy and simplicity are something superb, if not overwhelming.

Though usually so very busy, he is one of the most accessible of men. At his house in Fyzabad, Benares or Lucknow, it is a common sight to find quite a number of visitors at all times. It is a common experience also to come across persons there, sitting by the hour, without apparently any very special reason. Even when pressing work is awaiting him, Acharyaji cannot bring himself to shake them off. The result is that the most forward and insistent get their work done, while often important business remains unfinished. His over-conscientiousness leads him to do that work at a late hour at night, which completely upsets his delicate health. Indeed, he pays a high price for this lack of firmness with friends and visitors resulting in the consequent defect in organisation. Everything about him, however, seems spick and span and in order when he is staying with his great friend, Babu Sri Prakash in Benares. The visitors come flocking here as elsewhere, but somehow everything seems magically arranged, including hours of rest. One does not know whether Acharyaji is insured or not, but if he is, here is a tip for his insurance company.

His greatest handicap and the nation's misfortune has been his uncertain health. For long periods he is completely out of action. Those who have watched him during a severe asthma attack and seen him in an agony of suffering have often expressed surprise at his patience and cheerful-

ness. Since his release from detention in Ahmednagar Fort in June 1945, he has virtually been an invalid. His delicate health is all the more surprising, since both his parents were robust. His father lived to be 72 and his mother 87.

His captivating manners, his unassuming, but gigantic scholarship, his gifts of character and intellect have endeared him to hundreds of thousands. His is the typical case of a man who lives for an ideal and a faith—the ideal of a new classless society, where poverty, ignorance and exploitation are banished and the faith in the Common Man and his revolutionary ability to create a new world. And he lives his life with so much purity of purpose and dignity of spirit, that it ennobles all who come into contact with him and sets a new tone to public life.

I

SOCIALISM AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (1934)

SOCIALISM AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (1934)*

FRIENDS,

I AM deeply conscious of the high honour that you have done me in inviting me to preside over this first session of the Socialist Conference. I do not know whether I should thank you for the very difficult and delicate position in which you have placed me. How I wish this task had been entrusted to some one more competent than myself, but fates conspired against me and I had to bow to the inevitable. My task is made all the more difficult by the absence of our beloved friend, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, whose absence today we all so keenly feel and whose valuable advice and guidance would have been of immense value to us on this occasion.

I sincerely wish I could feel I deserved all this honour. I hope, however, with your co-operation and indulgence, I may prove not unworthy of it and that our proceedings may be conducted with that solemnity which the occasion demands and that our decisions may be such as will help the nation in its onward march to freedom.

We are meeting at a time when our national organisation is passing through a crisis. The All-India Congress Committee is going to meet tomorrow to consider questions of far-reaching importance and it is our duty in this conference to decide what contribution we shall make to the momentous decisions of that august assembly.

In our endeavours to influence the nationalist movement in the direction of socialism, we are at once met with the criticism, that it is difficult to reconcile nationalism with socialism and that if we want to establish socialism in our country, why not form ourselves into an independent group

* Full Text of the Presidential Address made to the First Session of the All-India Congress Socialist Conference at Patna on 17th May, 1934.

outside the Congress and act independently of its policy and be at the same time liberated from the reactionary influences of a lower middle class organisation.

The answer is that we do not wish to isolate ourselves from the great national movement against British imperialism which today the Congress symbolises. We admit that the Congress today has defects and shortcomings, yet it can easily be the greatest revolutionary force in the country. We should not forget that the present stage of the Indian struggle is that of the bourgeois democratic revolution and therefore it would be a suicidal policy for us to cut ourselves off from the national movement that the Congress undoubtedly represents. The one great quality of a true Marxist is that he is not dogmatic or sectarian in his attitude. The dialectical method is a living method of great elasticity and one who follows it, has to adapt himself to the changing situation. It does not, however, mean that he is an opportunist or that he is ready to compromise his principles. The truth is that he never loses sight of the ultimate goal but knows the limitations and the possibilities of a particular situation and he will not sacrifice the gains thereof merely for the sake of a doctrine or a dogma, if those gains are an inevitable stage to be reached on the way to socialism. He will never refuse to join a fight for independence carried on by the lower middle class if he can thereby overthrow foreign domination. He will, no doubt, if circumstances are favourable, try to establish a Socialist State but if the objective situation is not ripe for such an event, he will not for that reason frustrate the cause of freedom by refusing to fight the alien power in collaboration with other classes. His conduct will be quite consistent with the principles he professes, because for a subject nation political independence is an inevitable stage on the way to socialism, even though we believe that in the present Indian conditions, the probability is that both the revolutions may be carried out simultaneously. But in these matters there cannot be any certainty. Much would depend upon the quality of the leadership of the freedom movement. If the leadership is

imbued with socialist ideology, is endowed with political vision and can act boldly, it will certainly take advantage of the situation if it happens to be favourable. But whether or not socialism will be established in our country simultaneously with the winning of freedom cannot be categorically answered. Capitalist democracy is any day preferable to serfdom and subjection to alien rule. And he will be a short-sighted and a very narrow socialist who will refuse to take part in a national struggle simply on the ground that the struggle is being principally conducted by petty bourgeois elements of society although he will make ceaseless efforts to give it a socialist direction. In the peculiar conditions of India, the socialist can very well work within the Congress and combine the national struggle with Socialism.

WHAT ABOUT CLASS WAR?

The charge will be levelled against us that by preaching the theory of class struggle, we shall be promoting class war. It will be said that weak and disunited as we are, it is all the more necessary that we should try to unite all classes and communities in one big common effort to win freedom and that a united front should be presented to the enemy. It will be said that we would alienate the sympathy and goodwill of certain classes by preaching the gospel of socialism at this critical juncture in our history. Some will advise us to postpone it for a future unknown date and in the meantime to concentrate all our efforts on winning political freedom. We do not question the sincerity of those who offer this advice to us and who appear to be very solicitous about preserving social peace. But I fail to understand why these friends object to any efforts being made for making the oppressed classes self-conscious. Our critics conveniently forget that the upper classes who wield economic power in the country and have existing social conditions in their favour need not be class-conscious, because it is only in this way that they can really feel that they are defending not their class-interest but the interests of the whole society. The social basis being very narrow

they really feel stronger by entertaining the belief that they are acting in the interests of society as a whole. Yet as a matter of fact class solidarity is there and you can see it awakened when an attack is made on their prerogatives and privileges in society. They all combine together in repelling the attack. But the oppressed classes of society, who have to win power, cannot afford to be consciously altruistic and they need to be class-conscious, because without developing a sense of class-solidarity, it is not possible for them to have an effective organisation which alone can win power for them.

As for the plea of unity, I say that unity is of value only if it generates power, but this is possible only when two groups which are to unite together on a common platform subscribe to the same ideal and methods of work. In the contrary case, such unity can only bring weakness and demoralisation to both parties. As a matter of fact the process of intensive differentiation amongst the various classes of society has been going on in the country with greater and greater rapidity, cutting off more and more layers of the upper and middle classes from the national movement. New classes are being formed and are being separated from the great mass of the people. Efforts are being made by the Government to fortify its position by bringing into prominence the reactionary forces of the country such as the princes, the big landlords and the communalists, and by arraying these forces and its new allies against the national movement. This has been the basic policy of British rule in India from the very beginning. It is forming alliances with Indian capitalists by offering them a junior partnership in the big concern of British imperialism. In these circumstances is it not meaningless to talk of unity?

Instead of wailing over unity for which no basis exists, it is our duty to find out methods that will intensify the national struggle which has so far been a predominantly middle class movement. I feel that the only way to do it is to broaden the basis of the movement by organising the masses on an economic and class-conscious basis.

The two instruments which can make a class self-conscious are propaganda and organisation. The peasants are notorious all the world over for their incapacity to organise themselves and to develop common understanding. Left to themselves, they can only lodge their protest by spontaneous peasant risings when conditions become unbearable. This has been the case in Ireland and Russia, and India is no exception. The history of British rule in India is full of such risings whenever drastic changes were introduced by the Government in the landed system of the country and when the village community was being destroyed. Conscious efforts for propaganda and organisation were made in these countries only when high-souled and selfless individuals took up their cause or when the national movement, being compelled by the necessity of widening its social basis, turned towards them. These ignorant people trampled upon by tyranny and sunk deep in superstition know only one way out and that is to rush headlong into riotous conduct, and then the Government makes short shrift of them. It is only the revolutionary intelligentsia that can organise them for disciplined action.

THE MASSES ARE IMPORTANT

The masses are the class of the future. The Russian experiment is slowly though surely helping the masses to take the centre of the world stage. The needs of the Indian democratic movement also require an alliance between the lower middle class and the masses. We are being irresistibly driven to widening the social basis of our national movement by formulating economic policies for the welfare of the masses. Socialism is in the air. We cannot escape it. A new school of thought has come into existence and has come none too soon. In the days to come, the Congress shall more and more talk of radical economic programmes, just as the Government and the liberal politicians will more and more talk of planned economy and of measures for the uplift and welfare of the masses.

The Congress today may accept a socialist programme only in a mutilated form but the whole drive of the nation will be in that direction, because the responsibility for carrying on the struggle for national independence is more and more devolving upon the masses. Congressmen have so far been approaching the masses in the name of democracy and political freedom, but these high platitudes have never moved them out of their apathy and quiescence and the response accordingly has not been very satisfactory. These abstract ideas make no appeal to the masses because they have no meaning for them. They can, however, be made restive and class-conscious and can come into the arena of active warfare only when an economic appeal is made to them. Whenever they have arisen, their slogan has been removal of some specific grievance and not the slogan of liberty and equality.

THE ROLE OF LABOUR

The labour movement in India has out-grown its purely trade union character. The working classes are slowly developing political consciousness and working class parties have already come into existence in some provinces while steps have been taken for the formation of an All-India Working Class Party. Indian labour is organising itself for the overthrow of capitalism and has decided to carry on an intensive agitation to resist all forms of imperialist and capitalist exploitation. The All-India Working Class Party has placed before itself the immediate task of achieving complete national independence from the standpoint of the working class. This has been defined to be the political objective of the working class in the Platform of Unity. It desires to place itself at the head of the national struggle and to act as its vanguard. It claims to lead the peasants as well whom it regards as a valuable ally in its struggle against Imperialism and its Indian supporters. The demands which will serve as the basis of its agitation consist of a section of peasants' demands as well.

I recognise that the working class movement has yet to make much headway in this country. It is torn and split

by internal dissensions. Opportunist leaders have caused division in its ranks and have misled the workers. Efficient revolutionary leadership is lacking and the organisation is imperfect. This is why the strike activities of the working class have so often been unsuccessful. Earnest efforts are being made, however, to achieve and to perfect unity of the organisation. A general strike of textile workers has been declared to secure their demands. If efforts for unity succeed and the right kind of leadership is available, the working class movement will soon grow into a mighty and powerful force.

THE ROLE OF THE CONGRESS

The Congress is the biggest political organisation in the country. It enjoys the confidence and affection of the masses and has built up a prestige for itself by a long record of public service. Our inheritance is certainly rich but we shall not be worthy of it, if we simply allow ourselves to relapse into constitutionalism and reformism or waste our opportunities by a policy of inaction. New conditions impose new tasks. The national struggle is coming more and more to be identified with the struggle of the oppressed classes, and a full recognition of this fact alone will enable us to formulate correct policies for the future. Just as the purely economic movement of the working class is irresistibly growing into a political movement, in the same way the purely political movement of the Congress is unconsciously developing into an economic movement for the masses. The economic struggle of the workers develops into the political struggle because they are quick to perceive that the imperialist Government takes the side of the capitalists and becomes their ally. In the same way, the leaders of the political struggle are more and more coming to realise that the upper classes are making a united front with British imperialism against the national movement and are therefore being forced by the exigencies of the situation to enlist the sympathies of workers and peasants. The needs of the situation demand a new orientation of policy and outlook.

CO-ORDINATION OF FORCES REQUIRED

The struggle of the workers should be linked with the struggle of the Congress and through it with the struggle of peasants and the lower middle class. It is only when they will all unite into one big effort that the battle will be won. All the forces that are working for the political independence of the country have to be co-ordinated with each other and this is possible only when all come to possess the same ideals.

The working class has been very slightly touched by the Congress movement. We have generally kept them at an arm's length, and have as a rule not taken any interest in their struggle against Indian capitalists. This is why the big general strike of the textile workers of Bombay, one of the most notable events of the day, conducted so heroically and against such heavy odds, does not strike an average Congressman's imagination nor does it evoke our active sympathy. It seems to be no concern of his. On grounds of social justice alone they deserve the sympathy and support of the Congress. They are being thrown out of employment in large numbers, their wages are being reduced and their standard of living is being lowered. The least we could do was to raise a fund for their maintenance during the period of strike. But we do not think of these things because somehow or other we have come to feel that it is not for us to interest ourselves in industrial disputes. Is this the way to win the confidence of the workers? No wonder that working-class struggles have no organic connection with our movement. They take their own course, though it is a fact that the initiating of a major struggle by them is a sure index of the coming political struggle in the country. All the great national struggles that have been conducted by the Congress have been preceded by strikes and other forms of industrial unrest. It is only when the two struggles have synchronised with each other that the national struggle has reached its highest watermark. If the two forces could be consciously brought into relationship with each other, the struggle could be carried on with greater effectiveness and speed and for a much

longer time. The objective situation in the country continues to be revolutionary and if we had achieved co-ordination of forces, all the dejection and despair so conspicuous today, would not have come upon us.

One more advantage would have accrued to us, as a result of such a policy. In India where the labour force is drawn from villages and where the industrial worker remains a villager at heart the worker can act as a standard bearer of revolution in villages. The history of the peasant movement in Russia reveals the interesting fact that the movement was strong specially in those places where the leaders had previously been workers influenced by the propaganda in the towns. The Congress must come in line with the new thought that is convulsing the land. It is only in this way that we can link ourselves with the world forces that are moulding the new society that is to emerge from the bosom of the old.

The present world situation has a vital relation with our movement, particularly the socialist movement. It will not be therefore out of place to survey it briefly in order that we may better understand the character of our movement.

PROSPECTS OF INDUSTRIAL CIVILISATION

We are living in a world the economic foundations of which are crumbling before our eyes. The world economic crisis is deepening every day and no possible way out seems to be in sight. Various remedies have been suggested by orthodox economists and financiers to get over the crisis, while retaining the capitalist framework of society. The State Capitalism of President Roosevelt is being hailed with delight and he is coming to be regarded as the saviour of capitalist society. Various efforts are made to tide over the crisis by deliberately holding back industrial progress, by restricting output and by raising prices of commodities by artificial means. Who does not know that in the United States maize has been used as fuel and that cotton growers have been persuaded on payment of compensation to destroy ten million acres of crop?

Who does not know that in order to maintain high prices and profits two million sacks of coffee were thrown into the sea in Brazil? In Germany millions of poods of rye have been used as pig fodder and every possible step is being taken to reduce the cropped area of other agricultural products. We must not forget that this is a crisis superficially of overproduction but really of goods and chronic maldistribution. The tragedy of the situation is that though productive powers of society have grown excessively, the purchasing power of the people has somehow vanished and millions of workers and peasants have been ruined. Millions of workers have been thrown out of employment and those who still work have their wages reduced and their other social benefits taken away from them. This is the inevitable consequence of an economic system whose basis is exploitation and whose essential motive is profit-making.

Side by side with the intensification of the economic crisis, a political crisis is also growing acute. Parliamentary democracy, which is only the political form of capitalist economy, has been similarly involved in a crisis. Representative institutions are crumbling on all sides, and doubts are being expressed as regards the ability of such institutions to provide a way out of the *impasse*. People are getting disillusioned and where there was once assurance and peace of mind, there is now unrest and uncertainty. Other social institutions so far regarded as sacred are being critically examined and their authority is being gradually undermined. In some states, even the pretence of democracy has been openly given up and in its place naked autocracy in the shape of Fascism has been enthroned. Other states while retaining outward forms of parliamentary democracy have assumed large dictatorial powers. parliamentary governments have grown unstable and political parties and groups are being multiplied, thus making parliamentary government more and more difficult. Even the mother of parliaments has not been able to escape a constitutional crisis and a Fascist party has come into existence even in democratic England.

The decaying capitalist society is today engaged in a life and death struggle with the new order which is being born from within its womb. It is making all sorts of experiments and trying various expedients just to save itself from the impending catastrophe. It is preparing itself for the coming struggle and in the process it has to cast democracy to the winds and to buttress itself on the seemingly impregnable rock of open dictatorship. Italy and Germany have already gone *fascist* and it has to be seen whether other countries will or will not go the same way.

The question is as to why such a serious and unending crisis has overtaken the capitalist mode of production, when we know that it has hitherto been a beneficent force and a means of promoting the development of the productive powers of society. We now find that the period of phenomenal expansion of capitalism has suddenly ended. It is no longer possible for capitalists to create an illusion of growing democracy by conceding the demands of workers, by raising their standard of life and by continually extending the social services. Today they are constrained to reduce the cost of production by rationalisation and wage-cuts. They are launching an offensive against workers, not only by attacking their standard of living but also by limiting the rights which they formerly enjoyed.

CAPITALIST CRISIS EXPLAINED

This is because capitalism has reached the last stage in its development when it cannot but act as a fetter upon the effective use of available resources. This last phase in which capitalism finds itself is imperialism, which has been defined by Lenin as the monopoly stage of capitalism. Let Lenin explain himself:—

"Free competition is the fundamental property of capitalism and of commodity production generally. Monopoly is the direct opposite of free competition but we have seen the latter being transformed into monopoly before our very eyes, creating large-scale production and squeezing out small-scale production, replacing large-scale by larger-scale production, finally leading to such a concen-

tration of production and capital that monopoly has been established. The result is: cartels, syndicates and trusts, and merging with them, the capital of a dozen or so banks manipulating thousands of millions. And at the same time the monopolies, which have sprung from free competition, do not eliminate it, but exist alongside of it and over it, thereby giving rise to a number of very acute and bitter antagonisms, points of friction, and conflicts. Monopoly is the transition from capitalism to a higher order." 'When capitalism enters the stage of imperialism monopoly and finance capital becomes dominant, the export of capital acquires special importance and international monopoly combines of capitalists are formed which divide up the world."

In this stage capitalism becomes decadent and parasitic, anarchy reigns in social production and capitalism finds itself unable to find a market for the increased supply of goods which it is able to produce. The struggle between monopoly combines for markets, raw materials and foreign investment is intensified. The international competition rapidly develops and each group tries to reduce the cost of production to undersell the other. But for reducing the cost of production the wages have to be lowered, the standard of life of the workers has to be reduced, and millions of workers are necessarily thrown out of employment because of technical improvements effected by technocrats. The purchasing power of the masses thus reaches vanishing point and this in return largely reduces the demand for goods. This is the contradiction in which capitalism finds itself involved today. The contradiction is inherent in capitalism and as the crisis develops the contradiction is also sharpened. This leads to conflicts and antagonisms between capital and labour on the one hand and between imperialist countries on the other. War danger is looming large today. Efforts for world-peace and disarmament have again and again proved abortive. The prestige of the League of Nations is at its lowest ebb and peaceful solutions of political and economic rivalries are becoming more and more impossible. A regular race of armaments has begun, tariff

wars are the order of the day, national jealousies and rivalries are growing apace and the stage is set for a new imperialist war.

On the other side, the struggle between capital and labour is being intensified. Working class organisations have been ruthlessly suppressed in certain countries and they are not allowed to have a political existence, while in other countries there have been shootings and massacres of the workers. The rights of free speech and public assembly are being everywhere attacked and the right of strike is being narrowed down. What do these facts indicate? That capitalism has entered into a blind alley and does not know how to get out; that it is seeking a solution of the difficulty by having recourse to palliatives and temporary expedients, by controlled capitalism or by fascism. As the danger increases the possibilities are that it will tend more and more towards fascism.

The antagonism between labour and capital, though temporarily put down and suppressed, will appear again with greater virulence and may lead to a successful revolution of workers.

THE WAY OUT

Socialists say that the only way out of the difficulty is the socialisation of the means of production. They say that production has been socialised though ownership of the means of production continues to be in private hands. And it is only when the means of production ceases to be owned by small class and comes to be owned by society as a whole, that the inherent contradictions of capitalism can be resolved. Marx has said that when capitalism becomes a fetter on the power of production the stage is reached when it can be superseded by another order. He does not, however, mean to say that the new order will come into existence of itself. He only means to indicate the possibilities of a new order when such a situation arises. Of course in his opinion a socialist order is the most appropriate order for the new conditions, but it cannot be established unless men consciously work for it.

The other alternative which deserves serious consideration is fascism, because, both socialism and fascism claim to offer a permanent solution of the difficulty. It is these two ideas that will compete with each other in the future for victory, and on the result of their struggle the future destiny of mankind depends.

FASCISM

While judging fascism, I shall try as best I can to steer clear of prejudices that have been created against it. I shall not judge it by the reign of terror which fascists established when they assumed reins of power. The overthrow of parliamentary institutions, the suppression of all other political parties and organisations, the orgies of murders and *pogroms* against Jews are some of the accusations that are preferred against them. But we should not take these into account when forming an opinion of the system which they claim to have established. They claim to have discovered a middle term between the capitalist and the communist order. They are hailed in capitalist circles as saviours of the world from the scourge of communism. There is no doubt that communism lies low in fascist countries today but who can say that the communists will not raise their heads again if fascism fails to fulfil its promises.

Much has been made of the fascist theory of the Corporate State. Some claim it to be "the greatest constructive achievement of the mind of man." It is said that "the corporate state will prescribe the limits within which individual interests may operate. Those limits are the welfare of the nation. Within these limits, all activity is encouraged; individual enterprise, and the making of profit are not only permitted, but encouraged so long as that enterprise enriches rather than damages by its activity the nation as a whole." This is unexceptionable. The question, however, is as to how it is proposed to achieve this purpose. May we enquire what instruments have been fashioned to secure the ends in view? Let us turn to the laws and decrees which established a Corporate State in

Italy. On a study of these laws and decrees, we don't find much to justify the claim that has been made for it. They only impose compulsory arbitration for all labour disputes and set up labour tribunals for punishing withdrawal of labour by more than three workers. They also contemplate institution of joint committees of employers and workers to settle disputes. The Corporate State has not saved Italy from the economic crisis. It has not saved it from the curse of unemployment.

It is only fair to state that Italian fascism has some admirers also outside Italy. Paul Einzig who has examined the economic foundations of fascism both in Italy and Germany describes Italian fascism as constructive fascism and German fascism as destructive. He has, however, to admit that up to the present, fascist Italy has not adopted a managed economic system. But he says that "she has created suitable preliminary conditions for the change, and has actually made some progress towards it." The suitable preliminary conditions to which he refers are the discipline and the spirit of co-operation which, according to him are displayed by the Italian people. The corporations, (the corporations taken together from the corporate state) though conceived as early as 1926, did not come into existence before 1933. Their function is said to be consultative and conciliatory. In this way they seem to be merely Conciliation Boards. The favourable opinions that have so far been given are generally based on the philosophy of Italian fascism as explained by its author and on the text of laws and decrees that have been published for establishing the corporate state and not on any success that fascism has achieved.

The Nazi movement of Germany is another species of fascism though Mussolini, the original founder of fascism, does not accept the claim. The programme of the Nazis contained a few items of a socialist programme as well. The Nazi movement having its social foundation in the lower middle class ruined by war and inflation naturally had to adopt a hostile attitude towards land owners and big enterprises. But Hitler, like Mussolini, had climbed to

power with the help of big industrialists who were the principal financiers of the movement and they would not have done so, unless they had the assurance that they might use Hitler for their own ends. The policy of Hitler has accordingly been one of extreme reaction.

In the economic field his policy is of economic nationalism, but this policy is not suitable for Germany, because it is principally an exporting nation. It will certainly result in a sharp fall in the standard of living and will ultimately bring about disillusionment.

The lower middle class of Germany has joined hands with big capital in suppressing socialism. The lower middle class is usually the follower of the upper middle class and its chief ambition is to differentiate itself from the labourer. The small producer and the petty shopkeeper in Germany had been ruined by competition with large-scale producers and owners of big stores and this had caused a wide gulf between the two. Yet the lower middle class could not see its self-esteem wounded by association on equal terms with the proletariat. The capitalists and the workers had powerful organisations and occupied the centre of the stage, while the lower middle class section of society was unorganised and overshadowed by others.

It remains to be seen how long this combination of the lower middle class with the capitalists is going to last. Only partial and temporary remedies have been applied for reduction of unemployment. What will be the final outcome of fascism, it is difficult to say. It seems to be clear, however, that fascism is only attempting to suppress the contradictions created by capitalism without attempting to remove the causes of those contradictions. The final issues will largely depend on the capacity of the fascist state to keep under control disintegrating forces working within capitalism.

SOCIALISM THE ONLY WAY OUT

If fascism is rejected, socialism alone holds the field. It is no longer a mere principle and dogma, but is being translated into action, at least in one country. The Russian

experiment is going on before our eyes and we can study the experiment and form our own conclusions. Russia is the only land without unemployment. The great merits of its planned economy are being freely recognised even by capitalists, who have borrowed the idea from Russia for application to their capitalist economy. Factories, land, transport and credit system have been socialised, the collectivisation of farming is taking place. In place of anarchy we have planned guidance of economic development. The foundation of a socialist economy has been well laid. The level of production is being continually raised and with it the standard of life of the masses. The first Five-Year Plan had a tremendous success and the second plan is being accomplished.

The fact that the Soviet State is progressing rapidly despite the hostility of an antagonistic world, and even in the midst of widespread economic crisis, is in itself a proof positive that it has a message to give. It is not necessary that other countries should traverse all the stages Russia has passed through nor is it necessary that we should implicitly follow the Soviet plans in every little detail. The policies can only be adjudged with reference to the particular circumstances of each case but it is also clear that the Russian experiment has undoubtedly much to teach and has facilitated the task of others who may have to embark upon the socialist experiment.

As G. D. H. Cole has beautifully put it: "Industrialisation has become too productive to be consistent with oligarchy; socialism is the indispensable system for the age of plenty." When the profit-motive is eliminated, all the institutions are reshaped and society produces not for profits but for use. The state organises production and distribution according to a plan. 'To each according to his needs' is the ultimate principle in the distribution of the social product, but it cannot be attained all at once.

SOME CURRENT MISCONCEPTIONS

I think it will not be out of place here, to remove some of the prevalent misconceptions about socialism. Socialism

has been much misunderstood not only by its opponents but also by its followers. Many of the misconceptions will not arise if we remember that we are dealing with scientific and not utopian socialism. We are led to think that socialism in Russia is a perfected system and all our criticisms are made from that point of view. We would not have fallen into this error, if we had remembered that socialism cannot be established overnight and that it is a growing thing. It is also natural that in its initial stages it should bear the marks of the capitalist system from which it is emerging. I shall not try to answer the questions which are usually asked about conditions in Russia. But I shall certainly like to say a few words on the prevalent misunderstanding about just one or two matters connected with socialism.

MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

The "materialistic conception of history" which is a very important contribution of Marx has been misunderstood. Owing to the use of the word 'materialistic' in the expression it has often been thought that scientific socialism as propounded by Marx must be a materialistic doctrine. People say that Marx has denied the existence of mind, that he had no respect for spiritual values and that he did not recognise the force of ideas. It is said that Marx recognised only the supremacy of matter and regarded it as the only factor in the evolution of history. All these statements are incorrect. Marx recognises both mind and matter as formative forces in history. He regards man as an active agent who consciously shapes history. The determining power of man is fully recognised in his system, but according to him the mind of man acts on a given objective situation, which sets the limits within which it can act. Economic motives play a predominant part in history, but it does not mean that there are no other causes at work. All that Marx means to say is that an idea can influence the course of history only when it realises itself in fact and thus becomes a thing. He has nowhere considered the question of the relative importance of mind and matter. Both are

equally important. Man cannot create anything independently of the objective situation nor can a given objective situation by itself produce a result desired by man without his active participation. He only used the expression to distinguish his method from the idealism of Hegel who denied the reality of the world of experience and only recognised one Absolute Idea.

Marx does hold that many causes operate in the evolution of history. Legal and political systems though derived from the methods of production, subsequently become independent forces in themselves with a power to influence the course of history. Marx has always held that what was originally derivative had the power of becoming an independent cause. Therefore, it is wrong to say that Marx recognised only one single cause of historical evolution.

PERFECTIONIST CRITICISMS

Again, through the influence of utopian socialism, men have come to associate with socialism the existence of ideal conditions in every sphere of life and when the present conditions in Russia are not found to conform to the imaginary norm, the cry is raised that the socialist experiment is not proving successful. But the founders of scientific socialism never claimed any such thing for it. They simply affirmed that it is only after the socialist revolution is completed that for the first time in history, man leaves the conditions of animal existence behind him and acts as a human being. They knew quite well that human nature could not be transformed in a single day. But it is undoubted that with the advent of socialism, man enters into a new plane of existence. Men will certainly not be converted into angels in a Socialist State. But it is also certain that human character will attain a much higher level because the limitations set by the present day acquisitive society would have disappeared.

ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Again, it is said that socialism has not been established in Russia because there is no equality there. But no one has

ever said that in a Socialist State all men will be identical in every respect. In the sphere of distribution a socialist's ultimate goal is 'to every man according to his needs.' Marx has thus explained his idea of equality. He says:—

"One man will excel another physically or intellectually and so contribute in the same time more labour, or can labour for a longer time... Further, one worker is married, another single, one has more children than another, and so on. Given an equal capacity for labour and thence an equal share in the funds for social consumption, the one will in practice receive more than the other, the one will be richer than the other and so on." The proletarian slogan of equality had reference to the capitalist society and was only a demand for abolition of classes just as the cry of equality of the new capitalist society of the French Revolution had reference to the abolition of feudal privileges. Says Marx:—"The real content of the proletarian demand for equality is the demand for the abolition of classes. Any demand for equality which goes beyond that of necessity passes into absurdity."

INDIA IS NOT EUROPE

The critic may say that he admits that socialism is a good thing and that so far as Europe is concerned he further admits that socialism is the one system which will supersede capitalism. But what are the reasons to believe that Indian conditions can ever be ripe for socialism so long as the country remains a predominantly agricultural country? The argument is that as the internal development of India is not of a capitalistic character, socialism has no chance of success here. This argument held good in the days when countries were independent of economic units but since capitalism has entered the stage of imperialism, this is no longer so. They have now become links of a single chain called world economy. It is now necessary to take into account the existence of objective conditions for revolution throughout the whole system of imperialist world economy, which forms an integral unit, for the existence within this system of some countries that are not sufficient-

ly developed from the industrial point of view, cannot form an insurmountable obstacle to revolution, if the system as a whole has become ripe for it.

In this state of affairs revolution will break out first not in countries where industry is most developed, but where the chain of imperialism is weakest. It is therefore possible that the country where the chain is first broken, may be less developed from the industrial point of view.

This is why revolution took place in Russia. The chain of imperialism was weaker and the masses were oppressed and were in a desperate condition.

A socialist revolution has every chance of breaking out first in a country where the masses have been ruined by economic exploitation, even though the country is not sufficiently developed industrially, if a revolutionary situation is present. India does satisfy all these conditions and as the crisis developes, the conditions become worse. It is true that in a less developed country the period of transition is much longer. But it is also true that such country may have a revolution sooner under the stress of imperialistic oppression.

SOCIALISM IN INDIA

Socialism has come to stay in this country and is daily gaining in strength and prestige inside the Congress as well as in the country. The social foundation of this new school of thought which has appeared within the Congress is the democratic intelligentsia. Outside the Congress among its adherents are representatives of workers and to much smaller extent peasants who constitute the real revolutionary elements of an anti-imperialist struggle. As a matter of fact the working class is the vanguard while the peasants and the intelligentsia are only its auxiliaries. Most of us today within the Congress are only intellectual socialists, but as our long association with the national struggle has repeatedly brought us into intimate contact with the masses, there seems to be no danger of our degenerating into mere theorists and doctrinaires. We should try to broaden the social basis of our movement by bring-

ing into our fold workers and peasants. I hope we will not rest satisfied with initiating the educated classes into the mysteries of socialist thought. I do not belittle the importance of the formation of socialist study circles and the creation of a body of socialist literature in Indian languages. That is good work and most essential too. But we must not forget that the real task before us is the political education of the masses, the carrying on of day-to-day agitation amongst them on economic issues and their organisation into a politically conscious class. It is only by working amongst the masses that we can emancipate ourselves from reactionary influences and shall be able to develop proletarian outlook. The great mistake that we members of the intellectual classes are apt to commit is to relegate the people to the background. The truth is that we are always willing to teach masses but never to learn from them. This attitude of mind is wrong. We should try to understand them and to act as faithful interpreters of their desires and needs. Alexander Herzen has truly said that one can only work upon men by seeing their dreams more clearly than they see themselves. We shall profit by this new experience and shall be able to straighten out many of the twists in the process of our thought and shall give our philosophy of life that realistic touch which is so essential for a revolutionary movement. Above all, we should not forget that action should be our watchword, that it is only the struggle that can increase the drawing power of the moment. "It would not be possible," wrote Lenin, "to draw in any way the wide masses of the exploited into the revolutionary movement, did not these masses see examples before them of how the wage workers of the different sections of the industry compelled the capitalists to immediate swift improvement of their conditions." It is, therefore, necessary that we should join the existing organisations of peasants and workers and start new one where necessary.

We can perform the task before us only if we try to comprehend the principles and purposes of socialism and to understand the dialectical method propounded by Marx

for the correct understanding of the situation and make that understanding the basis of true action. Above all, we should avoid dogmatism and sectarianism. We must take our stand on scientific socialism and steer clear of utopian socialism or social reformism. We can in no case allow ourselves to be satisfied with superficial modifications in the present-day arrangements. Nothing short of a revolutionary transformation of the existing social order can meet the needs of the situation. We should try to build up a disciplined party which knows what it wants and how it can get what it wants, which does not only know how to destroy but also how to construct. Without a clear conception of the objective and methods, success is impossible.

ALL-INDIA CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

The question of the formation of an All-India Congress Socialist Party will also engage our attention. In my humble opinion sufficient ground has not yet been prepared to enable us to take this step today. Accordingly, I favour the proposal of the Bihar Socialist group that an Organising Committee be appointed with regional secretaries who should prepare the ground for an All-India Organisation. So far as I know only three or four provincial groups exist within the Congress at present. The Bihar Socialist Party was formed in 1931 but it could not function because the national struggle intervened. The Bombay group was formed only last year some time after the Poona Conference. I know that a strong body of socialist opinion exists in the United Provinces, but no formal steps have yet been taken to form a socialist group in the province. A local group has of course been quite recently formed in Benares. Papers report that Delhi also has a socialist group to its credit. I have no information about other provinces. The first step in the organisation is the formation of provincial and local groups. This spade work should take much of our time and it will be the duty of the Organising Committee to see that the process is speeded

up. I hope it will be possible for us to form the party at the time when the next Congress meets.

CONGRESS MUST MEET

We are all of opinion that a special session of the Congress should be summoned to review the whole situation and to frame the programme of work for the future. It is encouraging to note that this opinion is also shared by a large number of provincial workers of different provinces. And this is as it should be, because the present A.I.C.C. which was elected in 1931 cannot be expected to reflect faithfully the opinion of the rank and file of today. But I do not think that we shall be justified in insisting that the question of Council-entry should be considered only by a full session of the Congress. I know that the Congress alone can take a final decision in the matter. But cannot the A.I.C.C. be permitted to decide the matter provisionally, its decision of course, subject to ratification by the Congress?

THE SWARAJ PARTY

But the principal question to be considered by us is quite different and that is the question of Swaraj Party's position vis-a-vis the Congress. Shall it be a distinct organisation, forming an independent unit of the Congress orgainsation like the A.I.S.A. and functioning as an autonomous parliamentary section of the Congress or shall it be a body acting under the control and discipline of the Congress and not only under the general supervision of the Working Committee of the Congress, as has been proposed by the leaders of the Swaraj Party? I want to examine the question only on broad grounds of policy and expediency. I have a geniuine fear that being deprived of the healthy influence of the revolutionary movement, the autonomous Swarajist organisation will in course of time become a pacca constitutional and reformist body and will develop a mentality which will run counter to the revolutionary policy of the Congress. Let it be remembered that the policy which has been adumbrated by the new Swaraj

Party is quite different in spirit from that of its name sake which is associated with the hallowed names of Srijut C. R. Das and Pt. Motilal Nehru. They had outlined a policy of consistent opposition from within the legislatures and they had decided against acceptance of offices. The new Swaraj Party has, however, not enunciated any such policy. Obviously the framers of the present policy have not allowed themselves to be guided by their predecessors. It is admittedly a reformist body. It has no obstructive tactics to its credit. It is silent on the most important question of acceptance of offices. It is difficult to distinguish its programme and policy from those of the liberals. Their programme mainly consists of legislative work. It is true that the party proposes to carry out the constructive programme of the Congress and to work for village organisation. It is difficult to understand what the authors of the programme mean by this last item. Do they mean to undertake welfare work in villages and to organise model villages as the Government are doing in some parts of the country? Or do they propose to revive the institution of village communities? It is significant to note that just like the Congress they fight shy of the labourers. They will establish agencies for foreign propaganda, but what agencies are they going to set up in the country outside legislatures and local bodies in order to enforce the national demand? The Constituent Assembly which they propose to convene in order to formulate the national demand, seems to be only another edition of the liquidated All-Parties' Conference. The central idea of the plan which Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had in his mind when he sponsored the democratic demand of the Constituent Assembly was absolutely different. While retaining the name our Swarajist friends have vulgarised the whole thing. I think, it will be injurious to the best interest of the Congress to allow the establishment of an out and out reformist party within the Congress, unless it is willing to function as an integral part of the Congress organisation and subject to its discipline.

THE IMMEDIATE TASK

Friends, we assemble here on a rather critical occasion. The A.I.C.C. is meeting tomorrow after years. You have to decide what proposals should be placed before it on behalf of the socialist movement within the Congress. We have to devise ways and means to resuscitate and reinvigorate the Congress. I know it is not such an easy task.

I know today we are demoralised and dejected. A defeatist mentality has overtaken the Congress. But in my humble opinion, there is no cause for dejection. It is true that national freedom is not in sight but there is no doubt of the fact that there has been powerful invigoration of the struggle for national emancipation. And it is no small gain that we have not entered into any compromise with British imperialism. We have made no surrender and the banner of the Congress has not been lowered. Mahatmaji has remained intransigent, though he has cleared the path for others by advising a halt. Above all, we should remember that no true effort is ever lost. In the words of Lenin, "unselfish devotion to the revolution and the appeal to people with a revolutionary faith are not in vain, even when many scores of years divide the sowing from the harvest."

It is obvious that we cannot remain content with the constructive programme of the Congress alone. All honour to those who wish to engage in such activities. But we cannot delude ourselves into the false belief that such activities will by themselves lead to mass action. Nor can we subscribe to the policy of reformism and constitutionalism which the new Swarajist wing of the Congress are going to pursue. The policy of alternating between direct action in a revolutionary situation and constructive or legislative work, according to one's temperament, in a period of reaction, does not commend itself to us. The situation continues to be revolutionary. The industrial crisis is not over and there are no signs of a return to industrial prosperity. The agrarian crisis in India is also deepening. And the measures contemplated by the Government—the regulation of production with a view to adjust it to demand

and other legislative proposals—would not do. Given proper leadership, therefore, we should carry the masses with us and march from victory to victory. Equipped with a socialist ideology and immersed in the work of making the masses economically conscious and politically organised, we can, with confidence, look forward to the future and hope in the fulness of time to lead the organised masses of India to freedom and full manhood. The next revolutionary wave will be much bigger and mightier. And let me assure you it is not as distant as some people think.

The process of differentiation is growing apace. The lure of the coming reforms has imbued with imperialist hues a section of the upper classes. In the new imperialist framework foreshadowed in the White Paper they hope to find ample satisfaction of all that they can legitimately desire. This army of deserters is likely to grow in other ways also. Let us open our ranks and let in fresh recruits, powerful recruits—the workers and peasants of India. This we can only do if we fervently and persistently agitate within the Congress for the adoption of an economic programme with a view to socialise the nationalist struggle. Only by so doing shall we make India ripe for democracy.

Friends, we are founding today the first cells of the socialist movement within the Congress. In the absence of our great leader, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, our task has become extremely difficult. We do not know how long we shall remain deprived of his valuable advice, guidance and leadership. I am sure he will hail with delight the birth of this new party within the Congress and that he will be watching our progress with keen interest from behind the prison bars. Let his great example stimulate and inspire us during the period of his incarceration and let us march forward with the assurance that the cause we represent will triumph in the end.

II

THE PEASANT IN INDIAN REVOLUTION

THE PEASANT IN INDIAN REVOLUTION*

I

The Indian Peasant

THE infinite capacity of the Indian peasant for endurance of suffering is well-known. His patience is proverbial. The moral and physical conditions of his life are simply indescribable. He has been subjected to many indignities and horrors from generation to generation. He has been made to carry the burden of all the other strata of society—the landlord, the usurer, the merchant, the priest and the official. And yet he has been generally submissive, and it was only when the oppression became extremely unbearable that he was roused into an outburst of indignation and broke out into insurrection like the fury of the elements. Such local insurrections have been innumerable in peasant history but they have generally brought him more hideous misery and persecution. National peasant revolts have been few and far between and though conducted on a big scale they have either ended in defeat after a brief spell of political power or have only introduced such a redress of abuses as was necessary to restore his confidence in law and government. The peasant played the role of an ally in the French Revolution and stood behind the urban middle class in its effort to demolish feudalism but the measures that were taken in his interest were of a negative character. He was freed from feudal servitude and instead of being bound to his feudal lord he got the freedom to hire out his labour to any one he pleased. The new economic organisation of capitalism required his freedom of movement for its labour supply.

* Presidential Address in Hindi to the Annual Conference of the All-India Kisan Sabha Gaya, March 1939.

But the first World War and Russian Revolution ushered in a new era for the peasant. The Russian Revolution not only broke his servile fetters but also threw the mantle of power over him. It created those elementary conditions which were absolutely necessary for the real emancipation of the peasant. The peasant now made a resolute break with his inglorious past. His traditional passivity was broken. His conservatism was being demolished. It was not land hunger alone that made him restive but now he wanted an assurance of justice, freedom and culture. He acquired confidence in himself and for the first time in history began to feel his political importance.

The social cataclysm resulting from the war also changed the whole aspect of the agrarian countries of eastern Europe. It marks the fall of the landlords. The privileges which they had enjoyed have been swept away, either without compensation or with inadequate compensation. The reforms have not been illusory this time. They have really been of revolutionary dimensions. The new reforms broke the feudal hold of the landlords on the social and political life of the country.

THE ORIENT MOVES FORWARD

The first World War also affected the Orient very deeply. The beginning of the peasant movement in India may be dated from the period of the War. In certain districts of Oudh there was a powerful movement to secure a revision of ejectment laws, and for the abolition of illegal exactions and the system of forced labour. The abnormal rise in prices of agricultural produce was a strong temptation for the Taluqdar to eject their tenants-at-will in order to secure high premiums for settling land with other tenants. This movement synchronised with the non-co-operation movement of the Congress and the Government was compelled to take measures to ease the situation. The Tenancy Laws were accordingly amended. This was the first occasion when in Oudh the peasantry was deeply stirred and got going.

The traditional outlook of the peasantry began to change and instead of looking up to the landed aristocracy as their natural leaders they slowly began to look up to the new leadership of the middle class, as represented by the Congress, for relief and support.

In 1929 the world was caught in an acute agrarian crisis. Colonial countries, like India, were especially hard hit because the imperialist countries shifted a considerable part of their burdens of the crisis to the colonies. Stalin said in his report to the 17th Congress—'Capitalism has succeeded in somewhat easing the position of industry....at the expense of the peasants in the colonies and in the economically weak countries by still further forcing down the prices of the produce of their labour, principally of raw materials and also of foodstuffs'. The catastrophic fall in prices involved millions of agricultural producers in economic ruin. Their little surplus if any vanished and their savings in the form of silver ornaments were used up to pay the land-tax. The peasant's burden of indebtedness considerably increased. Many peasants and small landowners were compelled to transfer their lands to those who were fortunate in possessing more capital and who were able to pay the rental demand of the landowning class. The crisis led to the wholesale ruin of the middle and small peasants. The situation of the village poor was desperate. Mass discontent was arising and expressing itself in peasant revolts. There was a decline in production and cultivation of poorer land. In the United Provinces alone the number of abandonments increased from 26,860 to 71,430. But inspite of the acute distress of the peasantry the Government ordered forced collection of land tax from 256,284 cases. The discontent in the countryside knew no bounds and no-rent campaigns were launched in many places to secure relief from the Government. The situation became so serious in the U.P. that the Government ultimately was compelled to make reductions in rents to peasants on a permanent basis.

The agrarian crisis was a part of the general capitalist crisis which has become chronic in spite of partial tem-

porary recoveries and no solution of the crisis seems to be possible within the framework of the capitalist system of society.

The chronic economic depression gave a powerful impetus to the Peasant Movement. Peasant organisations rapidly developed in Madras and in Bengal. Peasant struggles for reduction of rents and taxes and relief of indebtedness became more common. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, many of the peasants were enfranchised for the first time and the right to vote gave them new confidence. When his feudal master, who had inflicted terrible sufferings upon him, wooed and flattered him for his vote he felt for the moment that he too counted for something in his country. At the time of the elections a spirit of independence ran through the peasant masses and they registered their votes for the Congress which had incorporated the immediate demands of peasants in its election manifesto. The Congress had won their confidence and support by an unbroken record of social service of the masses and advocacy of their demands. It had also successfully conducted economic struggles of the masses. The prestige and influence of the Congress in the countryside ran very high at the time of the general elections. The masses were in motion on a nation-wide scale for the first time. There were stirrings of a new life on all sides. The masses had shaken off their apathy and had begun to develop a critical temper; they were asking themselves why they should be cheated of a large part of their earnings by zamindars who performed no useful function in the social economy of the village.

Moreover, at this time, social philosophers were pointing out how inadmissible it was that land which had not been created by man's efforts and which constituted one of the primary sources of his existence should be owned despotically. In the realm of theory the old view which regarded property as a subjective right was being replaced by a conception which regards it as a social function. This evolution was greatly helped by the exigencies of the first world war which led every State to curtail the pro-

perty rights of its citizens whenever its needs were pressing. In Italy the new theory received formal recognition from the State which passed a decree of expropriation of land not cultivated by its owner. The new Constitution of the German Republic enunciated this new principle in its Art. 153; which said; "Property carries duties with it. Its use shall at the same time be a service for the general good." And in Art. 155: "The cultivation and exploitation of the soil is a duty of the landowner towards the community." The Russian Revolution knocked the bottom out of the old conception by its land decrees. The agrarian countries were powerfully affected by the Russian Revolution and the new point of view began to receive general acceptance. The economic depression disturbed the economic structure of the country and exposed its weakness. The growing pauperisation of the toiling masses became a serious problem and it forced in the disinterested thinkers and economists the conclusion that in India landlordism is the greatest inequity on earth. Land can no longer be regarded as a source of rent. It is for use, and, therefore, it should be regarded as a definite and limited means for employing the labour of a category of citizens whose regular occupation was the tilling of the soil.

THE PEASANT COMES OF AGE

The class struggles of peasants have given them new experiences and taught them new political lessons. The peasants' isolation has been broken. He has come in contact with new ideas which were so far confined to a few intellectuals. The new view-point as regards ownership of land is becoming the common property of peasants. The dominant characteristic of the village which consisted of a fixed and unvarying outlook and habits of thought is fast disappearing. A revolutionary change has come over his ways of thinking. There is a new urge for knowledge. He has begun to criticise his surroundings and those whom he rendered unquestioning obedience in the past. The old sadness is giving way to buoyancy, and traditional submissiveness and resignation to fate to a new note of hope

and enthusiasm. A new spirit is abroad in the villages and if we make proper use of the new favourable situation and give a proper direction to peasant activities we can make them an irresistible force in the country. The virtue of discipline has to be brought home to them, and as the peasant community has all the world over been well known for its pacific intentions and been a bulwark of peace, it is not too much to expect that it will resist oppression and defend its rights and interests in a disciplined manner without resort to violence.

It is clear beyond doubt that this change in outlook and this demolition of the social conservatism of our masses, which is the preliminary condition of all progress, would not have been possible on a nation-wide scale if deep social discontent had not compelled them to give up their passivity and driven them to find a way out. And when peasants in the mass instinctively felt the same urge for a change, it was not difficult for them to take a decision. Old habits and ways of life sanctified by age are not altered so easily. Rural development activities, however laudable they may be, cannot by themselves be expected to work such a change. As a matter of fact, they can bear fruit on a vast scale only when the conservatism of the peasant is broken. The illiterate peasant folk, steeped in ignorance and superstition, can learn only through experiences of life. They loom large today in the political arena because of hard economic and social facts. Historic necessity has pushed them to the forefront and it is a matter of common knowledge that Government of India would not have come out with its programme of rural development if the peasant had not come to occupy a dominant place in the political scene. While on the one hand the Government was anxious to show its solicitude for the welfare of the peasantry by inspiring and financing campaigns for developing rural areas, by constructing new projects for the benefit of agriculturists and by adopting measures for their immediate relief, it was organising the big landowners to consolidate their power against the Congress so that under the new dispensation they might retain their

dominant position and serve the objects of the alien Government.

The Congress Governments also continued these activities with the idea of rendering disinterested service to the countryside. The new spirit that was abroad and also the fact that they commanded the confidence of the people made their task easier if they proceeded about the business in a scientific manner. But not much could be achieved as their resources for carrying on these beneficent activities were strictly limited. A realisation of one's limitations is the first postulate of wisdom, and Congress Governments would do well to engage in only selected forms of activity judiciously planned. The greatest need is to bring enlightenment to the door of the peasant. Literacy campaigns should therefore be given the first place in any scheme of Rural Development. Education of the masses is the *sine qua non* of all progress. Villagers should also be taught the necessity of co-operative effort. If the spirit of co-operation is fostered among them they can repair roads, improve water-supply and sanitation, take preventive measures against epidemics and maintain order. But for this the village community should have real administrative powers in the village and some of its old functions should be revived.

AGRARIAN LEGISLATION UNDER PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY

This brief recapitulation of the various measures that were taken to afford some measure of relief to the impoverished peasantry by various governments in the provinces will show that these measures were not always adequate to meet the immediate needs of the situation. Much more is possible within the framework of the present Act, and perhaps much more will be done in course of time. But it is regrettable that agrarian reform in all its aspects was being delayed for no good reason. The process was slow, and though Congress Governments enjoyed the backing of the masses, there was in evidence in certain provinces a feeling of hesitation to go fast for fear

of the vested interests. Though the measures hitherto taken were only in the nature of palliatives and did not foreshadow any radical change in the social basis of the landowning class yet a hue and cry was raised by the landed aristocracy as if changes of revolutionary dimensions were being incorporated in the statute. The economic situation was so desperate that drastic measures were needed to bring relief to the masses. All that the Congress governments did was only to ease a few of the more iniquitous burdens that the peasant was made to bear, but his condition is so miserable that the remaining burdens will prove irksome and heavy, and he will make an insistent and imperative demand to be relieved of them as well. It is no doubt true that whatever may happen, the peasantry is not again going to look up to the landowning class as its natural leader. The political influence of this class is surely on the wane although its social basis may not have been wiped out. It would be difficult to restore it. It seems that the storm of opposition that is being raised today to the introduction of agrarian reforms is due to the fear of the future and the realisation of the fact that the present measures only mark the beginning of a new era of such successive changes in the agrarian organisation as are sure to undermine their position of eminence and shatter their social basis completely.

They are out of their wits. But it is certain that if they had wielded political power today, they would have been compelled by mass pressure to take almost similar measures, of course with great reluctance. No amount of manoeuvring and rural development work would succeed in deceiving the masses nor would it be possible to keep the rising tide of peasant militancy under check. The overwhelming poverty of the masses clamoured for action, and they would take to extra-legal remedies if law did not come to their rescue.

The Congress Governments, it is admitted, laboured under a handicap, for the existing Act did not afford them sufficient scope for initiating revolutionary measures. But

it was certainly expected of them that they would exhaust all the possibilities of the constitution in order to bring the greatest measure of relief to the masses. The still more disquieting fact of the situation was that many of our ministers looked upon Kisan organizations and their workers with an eye of suspicion and distrust. The word of a Kisan worker was generally disbelieved. He was taken to be a stranger and his visit was seldom welcome. It was also distressing that criticism even by Congressmen was not relished. Even friendly criticism was resented and was sometimes unreasonably taken as an index of a hostile attitude. A Government responsible to the people should, instead of resenting criticism, invite it. It should not wait for taking action till the demand becomes insistent or specific action was threatened to enforce these demands. We fervently desire that Congress ministries should be enshrined in the heart of our people. Our ministries should, therefore, be more responsive to demands of the masses and listen to their grievances through their accredited representatives with patience and sympathy. The peasant movement should not be looked at askance. If abuses, which are pointed, are remedied and gross inequities are redressed, there will hardly be an occasion for peasants to have recourse to direct action. Adequate legislative measures should be taken to give protection to tenants against village usurers and village *banias*. The question of rural indebtedness should be carefully examined and if rural debts cannot be wiped out completely, the burden should be considerably eased. Special attention will have at the same time to be paid to the provision of capital and cheap credit facilities for farmers. Suitable laws should be enacted for the marketing of agricultural produce so that middlemen's profits be eliminated. Very close attention should be paid to the promotion of subsidiary industries and measures taken for comprehensive land improvement. Government support and encouragement should be given to farmers and an active agrarian policy should be followed.

NECESSITY OF PEASANT ORGANISATIONS

The question is often asked where is the need for the Kisan organization when the Congress membership predominantly consists of peasants and the Congress has in its agrarian programme of Faizpur and the Economic Rights Resolution of Karachi incorporated many of the demands of peasants in its programme. The single answer is that the Congress being a multi-class organization, the peasant is not able fully to assert himself in the national organization. His attitude towards other classes is not very free but is constrained and he finds himself lost in a mixed gathering. In order therefore to enable him to give up his hesitancy and to assume a more independent attitude, it is necessary to give him preliminary training in an organization of his own class.

Besides, the Congress being a national organization, is not in a position to accept the basic demands of peasants or for the matter of that any other demands unless pressed hard by circumstances. The dire poverty of the Indian masses has, from very early days, engaged the attention of the leaders of Indian public opinion, but they treated it as a political grievance to be attributed mainly to the heavy drain on India and not something which was inherent in the economic structure of the country and which could be removed only by revolutionary changes in that structure. The Kisan organization is therefore necessary to exert revolutionary pressure on the Congress to adopt more and more the demands of peasants. Such pressure has been applied in the past with good results and today the Congress is pledged to fight for the interest of peasants. And how can the Congress act otherwise when it claims to represent the nation and when, as we know, the huge exploited mass of peasants does constitute the nation? The Congress therefore, if it wants to serve the national interest, must seek to abolish the basis of all colonial and feudalistic exploitation.

As the level attained by the Congress organization is uneven in different provinces and as several committees

are controlled by Zamindar elements, the resolutions of the Congress cannot be implemented and remain in practice a dead letter. In such places, peasants will not receive that assistance from the Congress Committee to which they are entitled and their grievances will go unredressed for want of advocacy. It is exactly in such places that the existence of the Kisan Sabha will be mostly needed to carry on their day to day struggle. During the tenure of Congress ministries in eight provinces it became a part of the normal activities of the Congress to receive petitions from peasants and to help them in securing redress of their grievances, but cases were not wanting when an individual committee did not interest itself in the matter for the simple reason that it was controlled by Zamindars who were not true to the Congress programme and who used their position for frustrating peasants' rights and claims on the organisation. Again, we do not know whether this special interest which is being evinced today by Congress Committees in the day to day questions of peasants will be kept up at the present level.

For these various reasons the organisation of Kisans in Kisan Sabhas is a necessity and when the right of Kisans to organise themselves in unions has been again and again recognised by the Congress, is it proper, is it wise to insist on Congressmen remaining aloof from Kisan organisations? Though peasants ordinarily do not always distinguish between the Congress and the Kisan Sabha—and this fact supports the contention that Kisan Sabhas should not be suspect—it is a fact that the name 'Kisan Sabha' is dear to them and is a word to be conjured with. Kisan Sabhas will therefore be formed, if not by Congressmen, by others who may direct the movements into wrong channels and cause irretrievable loss to the national movement by setting up as a rival political organisation or as a communal and sectarian organisation representing only a particular community or class division of the peasantry, thus causing utter confusion amongst the peasantry and weakening their movements by breaking up their solidarity.

RELATIONS BETWEEN CONGRESS AND KISAN SABHAS

If the necessity for a separate organisation of peasants is established, it is necessary to emphasise the imperative duty on Kisan Sabhas to enter into friendly relations with local Congress organisations and to carry on their activities in co-operation with them as far as possible. The assistance given by the Congress Committee will not only be of great value to them, specially at the present juncture, but will also accelerate the process of making the Congress Kisan minded. It is a matter of experience that when the Congress was placed in power by the support of peasants and since special responsibilities devolved upon it for looking to the interests of the peasants, it became more and more Kisan minded. The process is, however, not yet complete and it will be some time before it is so. But if after importunating their help no response is forthcoming the Kisan Sabha will have no option except to move independently in the matter.

There should be, however, no desire to enter into rivalry with the Congress. The desire to gain predominance over the Congress should be checked. We must remember that the two organisations are complementary to each other. Each is strengthened by the support of the other. We are bound to make grievous mistakes if we do not constantly keep in view the complementary character of the two organisations. Kisan Sabhas are primarily to be organised to secure the economic rights of peasants and conduct their day to day economic struggles. But the colonial exploitation from which the peasant suffers cannot be ended without achieving complete independence, and as he cannot enjoy political freedom without political power, so long as India is in bondage, it is necessary that peasants should strive for national freedom in co-operation with other classes.

The Congress is the symbol of national freedom and is the organ of anti-imperialist struggle. The peasant therefore has to be taught to love and claim the Congress as his own organisation. A step-motherly behaviour towards it

will not do. If the economic struggle is to be linked up with the national struggle, in order to give social content to the national liberation movment, it is only just and proper that the two organisations should be inter-locked in permanent union. Jealousies and mental suspicions arise from time to time and endanger the union. Over-enthusiasts on both sides, taking a narrow sectional view, not knowing the importance of one to the other, may cause trouble. Irritants will be provided by each which may lead to a breach but if we exercise patience and look at the matter calmly and dispassionately we will put up with irritations and not allow them to lead to trouble. The Congress also will be wise in recognising the fact that Kisan Sabhas have come to stay and therefore it is politic to cultivate cordial relations with them and see that they are developed on correct lines. An organisation that claims to be national cannot afford to be hostile to an organisation of peasants provided it is anti-imperialist in character and is not anti-Congress.

The Congress also cannot gain its objective without mass action on a national scale and it will need the services of class-conscious militant peasants who will be ready to undergo any amount of suffering and sacrifice for the national cause.

The two therefore should wish each other well and each should find fulfilment in the other.

However well-intentioned one may be, the existence of two organisations may lead to some amount of friction, but this should not frighten us if we treat them as complementary to each other. It is therefore all the more necessary that everyone of us should take special care not to do or say anything which may lead to undesirable consequences. The hostile attitude of office-bearers of a particular committee should not lead to an estrangement of Kisan workers from the Congress organisation. A few persons do not represent the Congress, and if they misbehave, that is no reason why we should turn against the Congress itself. The Congress, after all, is the people's organisation for realising our destiny, and if some people

do not allow it to function as such in certain places, we should not lose patience and begin to think that the Congress is not our organisation. We should not try to gain sectional advantages over each other by the cheap method of abusing and by out-bidding each other in making promises which may not be fulfilled. As Congressmen we have to take care that the Congress does not become the dumping ground of all sorts of opportunists and self-seekers. In the same way, Kisan leaders have to see that their organisation does not provide shelter to mal-contents and disgruntled persons who want to use it as a spring-board.

The peasantry is not a homogeneous class. It has many class divisions among itself, whose interests are sometimes conflicting. The question, therefore, arises as to which class should comprise the organisation. If the organisation is to embrace within its fold all the sections of the peasantry, the interests of the various sections *inter se* should be harmonised and internal conflict avoided.

Our task today is to carry the whole peasantry with us. In determining the question posed above, we as revolutionaries, cannot allow ourselves to be guided merely by the conception of social justice or a sort of romanticism. If romantic conceptions were to shape our resolves and prompt our action, we would aspire to organise first the agricultural labourer and the semi-proletariat of the village, the most oppressed and exploited rural class which suffers the worst degree of economic and social bondage. Our conception of justice certainly prompts us to save first the interests of those who suffer most, but if we do so, we shall certainly be neglecting the huge exploited masses, consisting of small and middle peasants and landowners with small incomes who are in no sense better than small peasants. The peasants in the mass would, in that case, remain aloof from the anti-imperialist struggle and we shall thus lose a much more valuable ally than the village poor.

From another consideration also it would appear that the interest of the village poor can best be served in the present stage by mobilising the peasantry as a whole and

not by splitting it into its various sections, and placing them in irreconcilable opposition to one another. If the agricultural labourer is landless, it is no fault of the peasant that it is so. It is only the State that can satisfy his land hunger and political action will be necessary before this hunger can be satiated. The colonial exploitation, to which he is equally subjected by a foreign imperialism, can be terminated only by political action, and it is evident that such action cannot succeed unless the peasant in the mass is set in motion against it.

The question of wages, so far as the peasant is concerned, cannot be satisfactorily settled so long as his earnings do not show any appreciable increase. It is very difficult for him today to eke out an existence on the little piece of land which he tills. The little piece of land has become a part of his being and in spite of hard labour, he finds himself unable to extract a modest maintenance from it. His capacity to pay is strictly limited, and unless it is raised, it is impossible for him to pay more wages to his more unfortunate brother, who lives as wage-earner and has no supplementary source of income. It is only when the peasant's condition is ameliorated and the productivity of land is increased that he will be able to pay better wages. The agricultural labourer can, however, ask for better wages from rich peasants and landlords. The village poor must recognise his class solidarity with the bulk of the peasant in the present stage; it is only when he acts in co-operation with other sections of the peasant community that he can hope to improve his lot. He cannot afford to be either indifferent or hostile to the agrarian movement.

THE PROBLEM OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

It is true that the present programme, which may be representative of the interests of the bulk of the peasantry, will not contain much to obtain the favour and active support of the agricultural labourers and for this reason wage-earners will not usually be the leaders of the agrarian movement. It is also true that his interest in political

change would be very weak indeed and would not be a sufficient inducement for him to take an active part in the movement. Yet all the same, he instinctively feels that he should cast his lot with the bulk of peasants. His participation in the peasant movement will compel the leadership to include such items in the programme as can be safely incorporated without detriment to the general interest of the peasantry. Agitation for the abolition of the system of forced labour is obviously in his interest. There are many agricultural labourers who have also a little piece of land and if they happen to be tenants-in-chief they can get occupancy rights and will be benefited by the new law. The Kisan Sabha can also agitate for better wages from rich peasants and landlords. It can also demand from the state that barren land should be reclaimed and experimental state-farms should be established on which agricultural labourers be employed on decent wages. Again peasants should realise that if they want that their exploitation by the landlords should cease, they in turn should live on friendly terms with the rural proletariat. The number of landless peasants is ever on the increase and if today these internal conflicts have not come to the surface, in the coming days they are bound to accentuate. Class divisions within the peasantry will slowly mature, and if we are not fore-warned, landless peasants may come often into hostility with the agrarian movement. Our opponents know quite well that peasants do not form one indivisible class and they are exploiting this fact in order to split the peasant movement. The landowning classes always twitted Congress Governments about forgetting the interest of agricultural labourers. In this way, they wanted to wean away from the Congress the depressed classes.

Further, as agricultural labourers mostly belong to the depressed classes, it is possible that efforts may be made to organise them on a communal basis for the redress of their economic grievances. All such efforts are bound to retard the progress of the community if they bring about conflict with the peasantry. They will lead to a definite hostility between wage-earners and the peasant who em-

ploys hired labour. In places, however, where agriculture is being exploited on a capitalist basis, farm labourers can and should be organised to demand higher wages.

Unfortunately, the agricultural labourer suffers from double bondage. The peculiar caste system of India has degraded him in the social scale. The social reform movement which seeks to abolish untouchability is, therefore, to be welcomed. It will raise his social status and will serve to make him conscious of human dignity. But unless the material and moral condition of his life is immediately improved, social reform movement, however beneficent it may be, will not go a long way to make him a valuable self-respecting member of society.

These are some of the difficulties which will come in our way as the movement develops. The question of framing an agrarian programme is, therefore, of considerable importance. It is clear that our appeal should be to peasants in the mass.

A further complication is introduced by the fact that agrarian conditions differ from province to province. There is no uniform land system in the country. The problems of *Ryotwari* provinces are of a different character from those of the Zamindari provinces. Again, there are so many varieties of land tenure and revenue system that the agrarian problem is one of immense complexity. The All-India Organisation can, therefore, include in its programme only the more important items and give freedom to provincial branches to evolve agrarian programmes of their own to suit local conditions. As the movement develops, new problems will arise, which will demand our attention, and we will be called upon to amend our programme to suit changed conditions.

There are certain other difficulties which we cannot overlook, if we wish to develop the movement on correct lines. In certain parts of the country, where the bulk of landowners are not of the same religion as the mass of peasants, Kisan organisations have assumed a communal character. Such organisations have come into existence chiefly because the Congress organisation of the province

grossly neglects the interests of peasants. The All-India Kisan organisation has to contend with real difficulties in such places. The communal disharmony prevailing at the present time makes even co-operation between the two parties sometimes impossible, not to say of the merger of the two organisations. Though the agrarian movement may have received impetus from this fact in such regions, it cannot be considered as a healthy movement from the view-point of the national struggle. The peasant movement cannot afford to be split on communal lines. The multiplicity of peasant organisations will add to the confusion. The present position can be altered not by exhibition of anger or impatience. Our workers should try to win the confidence and support of peasants by selfless hard work and the more they will identify themselves with the peasant masses the more they will succeed in the task. But to achieve this end, we should also try to create cadres of workers belonging to the same religious community. Our workers should also try to negotiate a merger with the leaders of the communal peasant organisation. The Congress also should shed its narrow outlook and devote its attention to peasant work in the province.

In certain places the Congress organisation is controlled by professional men, merchants and moneylenders of the city and as their interests collide with those of the rural population, they cannot be expected to safeguard the interests of the peasantry. The result is that there are acute antagonisms between town and the country and the Congress has very little hold on rural areas. As the condition of the peasantry was desperate, it had to break away from the Congress and have its own organ of struggle. Against this background, it was natural that there should not be any love lost between the Congress and the Kisan organisations. It is fortunate that in the immediate past the relationship has considerably improved and the old hostility is fast disappearing. The Congress organisation should realise that such antagonism is in no way conducive to the growth of Congress influence and it should do all that lies in its power to fraternise with peasants and espouse their

cause. And this is possible only when there is a change in the local leadership of the Congress, and as the peasant elements are slowly gaining ascendancy, it is to be hoped that in the near future Congress will become a true representative of peasant interest. We must see to it that the Kisan organisation in such places does not develop ultra-leftist tendencies and tend to become a rival to the Congress.

THE DANGER OF PEASANTISM

There is one more danger to which I should like to refer in this place. It is the danger of *peasantism.* It looks at all questions from the narrow and sectional view point of the peasant class. Its tenets are derived from the ideal that our economic evolution, as the whole structure of our State, will necessarily have to retain its specific peasant character. It believes in rural democracy, which means a democracy of peasant proprietors. It claims that for the destruction of the war spirit and for the peace of the world such a regime is more suitable. It would, however, give protection to labour as labour cannot be ignored. It would also accept the representative form of Government because it has found favour with many classes. Its programme is not based on any theory, nor does it conform to any particular doctrine but is constituted of elements drawn from all the existing doctrines. It has the outlook of the middle peasant, who has been influenced by modern ideas, and is based on petty bourgeois economy. In its crude form it would mean a kind of narrow agrarianism and an insatiable desire to boost the peasant in all possible places. Such an outlook is unscientific and betrays a mentality which may give exaggerated importance to the small peasant. It is such a mentality which may under certain conditions desire to develop the Kisan Sabha as the organ of struggle for our political emancipation. It may also lead to acute antagonism between town and country. The scientific outlook will be determined by the laws of social change which assign every class its proper place in the social economy of the future. It will be guid-

ed by democratic conceptions of social justice, but the process of accomplishing the object will be governed by the laws of social change. The true objective, in the words of Stalin, will be to re-educate the main mass of the peasantry in the spirit of socialism and to gradually bring the bulk of the peasantry into line with socialist construction through the medium of co-operative societies.

AN AGRARIAN PROGRAMME

As has been pointed out above, 'our objective will be to re-educate the main mass of the peasantry in the spirit of socialism and to bring the bulk of the peasantry into line with socialist reconstruction through the medium of co-operative societies.' We have to work out a detailed programme in accordance with this general line. It is possible to get the main mass of the peasantry to travel along this road if we make the proper approach to them. Obviously, co-operative production, exchange and consumption, on the basis of a free peasantry, is the only sound and practical approach to the problem. Today, all serious scientific thinkers are agreed that the hope of the village and of the peasant lies in co-operation. The village can be set on its feet only as a co-operative commonwealth. And this co-operative commonwealth must have a democratic base, in the shape of free peasants. This alone can release peasant forces from the age-long bondage, provide the incentive to reorganisation of agricultural production and help to bring about higher and higher production, through co-operative, improved, scientific methods of production, exchange, and consumption in the village. The peasant will not improve his methods of cultivation and increase production if he is certain of being robbed of the fruits of his efforts, in the end, by the zamindar, the *mahajan* and other exploiters. If we want to revive the village, we have to democratise it, to rid it of its exploiters of various kinds —people who fatten on others' labour. The village must be cleaned and cleared of these obstructions in the path of progress. Landlordism, therefore, must go. There must be no hesitation, no equivocation in this matter. It will

be a betrayal of democracy to shilly-shally with regard to the abolition of this curse of the village, this stronghold of feudal reaction and rural oppression. Democracy cannot get going, cannot function in the village, if landlordism lives and continues to distort human relationships in the village and poison the springs of village life. Congress, in power again, must see to its sure and speedy end—its immediate abolition. Let us also be clear about what we mean by this. It means the abolition of all middlemen or intermediaries between the tiller, of the soil and the State. It is no use abolishing one set of landlords and recognising another set in its place. The abolition of landlordism cannot and should not mean the abolition merely of the topmost landlord.

With the landlord must go the *mahajan*, the village usurer. He is another instrument of exploitation and oppression in the village. The village cannot breathe freely and lead a clean life unless this poison is also eliminated. His claims must go immediately under moratorium, his power must be curbed and it must become impossible for him to carry on his nefarious trade. This work will have to be accomplished very carefully and cautiously, so that the village is not deprived of all sources of credit suddenly, without our being able to instal a new democratic machinery in place of this undemocratic and oppressive machinery of rural credit.

Along with these, the village must be rid of the corrupt, exacting and oppressive police force, the *Daroga* and his minions, and a clean, democratic machinery of law and order must be installed. The Village Panchayat should have some control over this machinery.

So far as the village is concerned, the machinery of justice is an allied problem. Inexpensive and democratic machinery of criminal and civil justice should be devised and installed. Through an improved system of Panchayats can be met the requirement of an inexpensive and democratic machinery of justice in the village for certain types of cases. The Judges may be appointed by the Provincial

Government or, if elected by the village, may be assisted by legal experts in the administration of justice.

All these are absolutely necessary if we wish to usher in the co-operative commonwealth in the village. Some sort of democratic village government is necessary if we wish to reorganise the social and economic life of the village. And the changes mentioned above are absolutely necessary if we wish to instal any system of village democracy. There can be no democracy in the village if the landlord, the *Mahajan*, the *Daroga* and the Police continue to exist or function as they have been doing. And naturally, then the village cannot be reorganised and revived. The country, therefore, must get ready for these changes in the immediate future and the Congress must be ready with its plans for effecting these radical changes in our socio-economic structure.

It will be the duty of the Kisan organisation to place this agrarian programme before the country and agitate for its acceptance.

But the time has come for us to rise above the agitational plane. The Kisan organisation was never strong and during the last three years it has been practically shattered. We have to build anew. Let us see that the foundation is truly laid. The task is of immense magnitude. We shall have to set up a stupendous machinery under proper leadership.

We shall also have to make provision for the ideological training of workers. Courage and faith are essential, but unless these qualities are combined with knowledge, the output will not be commensurate with the effort made. But, above all, Kisan workers must set their hands to the task of village organisation. For this purpose a group of villages should be selected in every district in which the intensive work should be carried on. In the matter of selection care should be taken that the area selected is politically conscious and the population inhabiting the area does not consist of heterogeneous elements. Constructive work and social service will have their full play but our workers should make a dynamic use of such a

programme. They should look after the education of village youth. For this purpose they will institute literacy campaign, organise adult education and start a circulating library. They will organise the peasant youth into a volunteer corp which should be taught to function as a village defence force. They will render many other useful services to the community; they will try to minister to their numerous little needs. Above all, they will organise peasants to fight anti-social elements and forces of oppression and exploitation.

The object in embarking upon such a programme is to create centres in the countryside from which light will radiate in all directions. They will act as guides and serve as citadels in a period of struggle.

This type of organisational work will create a sense of unity and self-confidence in the village community. It will infuse new life in them. The drab severeness that makes village life so hateful and unattractive to the village youth will slowly disappear. A positive purpose will be supplied to the people. The corporate life that will be slowly built up will give them new strength and solidarity. The centre will become a robust and powerful organisation ready for action and able to resist all oppression in times of crisis. It will be steadfast and dependable. The importance of such a task for an anti-imperialist struggle cannot be too much emphasised.

It is no doubt true that this kind of work is unassuming and may not attract an average worker who wants to live in the limelight and loves publicity. But a serious type of worker, who has a revolutionary aim and who knows exactly what should be done to accomplish it, will heartily approve of it and devote his heart and soul to the work. It can be asserted with full confidence that this genuine piece of revolutionary activity performed in the true spirit will bring in a rich harvest in fulness of time and that those who throw themselves whole-heartedly into this revolutionary work will command affection and respect of their co-workers and will be the pillars of the Kisan movement.

2

*Kisan Movement in the U.P.**

THE population of the United Provinces is about five crores. Though the population has not increased appreciably during the last thirty years, the pressure on land has gone up very much—4,000,000 more men are today dependent on agriculture than at the beginning of the century. The income from land, at the same time, has progressively declined. The result has been increasing unemployment among the people. More and more men every year have to emigrate to other provinces, even to other lands to seek livelihood.

Sub-division and fragmentation of land have been on the increase. Agriculture is no longer an economic industry. There are peasants with holdings of less than one-third of an acre; 35,000,000 acres of land are under plough in our province. About 35 million people are dependent—wholly or partly—on agriculture—that gives an average of one acre per individual dependent on land!

The land revenue has increased appreciably during the last thirty years. But rents have increased much more than revenue—as the 1931 Government Revenue Report showed: while the revenue has increased by Rs. 7,500,000 the rent payments have gone up by Rs. 66,500,000. The cost of production has also been going up. The share accruing to the peasant is steadily falling.

For these and other reasons the poverty of the peasants is increasing—and with it is increasing their indebetedness. The U.P. Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee computed the debt of the agriculturists at 124 crores—and that was in 1929! The zamindars' indebtedness was on 20 crores out of the total 124—During the post-1929 depression years the peasants' indebtedness has increased very much.

* **Congress Socialist Weekly 28-11-1936.**

For about 40 per cent of the peasants and the smaller zamindars the burden of indebtedness has been so severe they they are today no better than slaves of the *sowcars*. In spite of all their efforts—there is no hope of their paying off their debts. The scant measures designed by the Government to improve the situation have proved more helpful to the zamindars than the actual agriculturists. And these measures can offer no succour to the peasants where their zamindars are their *Sowcars*, also. There are hundred ways by which the zamindars can, then, recover their dues. Another result of these measures has been the curtailment of the credit facilities for the peasants. The *Sowcars* are not willing to lend money in the villages in the context of the new restrictions. And how can a peasant carry on his work without credit? Until the State itself makes provision for cheap credit to the peasants such restrictive measure will not serve, materially, the interest of the agriculturists. The co-operative societies have utterly failed in our province.

The rent regulations are very oppressive in our province —especially in Oudh. The agriculturists are, quite often, liable to illegal extortions, forced labour and payment of feudal levies. The sword of eviction for ever hangs on their helpless heads. The recent collapse of prices have created a fresh crop of difficulties. Even the reduction in land revenue has not been passed on to the tenants by the zamindars. Not a few Kisans unable to earn enough to pay off the rent dues and wanting to avoid eviction have been forced to run into debt to meet the rent-revenue charges.

The Kisans succeeded, after a severe struggle in 1920-21, in getting one of their demands satisfied. Formerly no tenant was entitled to permanency of tenure after seven years' occupation. On the expiry of that period a Kisan could be evicted at the whim and will of the zamindars. Thanks to a strong opposition against evictions, the Government made certain amendments to the laws concerned. Tenure-for-life was recognised. Though this amendment recognised certain rights of the Kisans, other alterations in

the laws provided fresh avenues to the zamindar to evict his tenant. These laws with all their limitations, have benefited the peasants, still the arch-evil—eviction—has not stopped as yet. The peasant slogan, today is: end eviction, recognise occupancy rights. The peasants also ask for reductions in the rent-revenue charges. Thanks to the continued economic slump, their economy has ceased to be profitable. Partial measures are unlikely to improve their condition. The rural reconstruction scheme has utterly failed. A big slice of the funds set apart for the scheme by the Government has been spent away on office expenses etc. Most of the work done has been of a showy character —designed to please the "visiting" officials. No one is evincing the necessary enthusiasm for the work. Even these grants are unlikely to be continued in future. These schemes are often no more than window dressing. They cannot lighten even one of the many pressing burdens of the Kisans. The slogan of stud bulls and drink milk are nothing better than social demagogy. These schemes do not solve even a single immediate demand of the Kisans—to say nothing about their fundamental demands. The only result of the rural reconstruction drive has been to give the Government a troupe of workers who go about the village carrying on Government propaganda.

How are our Kisans and the smaller zamindars to free themselves from these pressing problems? The condition of the smaller zamindars also is far from satisfactory. More than 86½ per cent of the zamindars pay less than Rs. 100 a year in revenue. 56 per cent of the zamindars pay revenue of less than Rs. 24 a year. 203 zamindars pay more than Rs. 20,000, and about 900 pay more than 5,000. The total number of zamindars—small and big—in our province is 1,60,000. 86½ per cent of these can participate in the Kisan struggles. The Kisans and the smaller zamindars should band together and form strong organisations. When the big zamindars are organising themselves there is no reason why the Kisans also should not come together. It is not in the interest of the smaller zamindars to go with the big zamindars. The former are zamindars only in

name. Not a few of them have not even enough land to support their families. Their zamindaries are so small that little advantage therefrom accrues to them. They too are sunk deep in the morass of indebtedness.

In 1918 a Kisan Sabha was organised in the Allahabad district. There was great unrest in the whole of Asia at that time. To win the war the Allies had declared their acceptance of the principle of self-determination. The enunciation of this principle by President Wilson had roused unprecedented enthusiasm among the oppressed nations. Their hopes rose high. Villages by thousands had been recruited for the army and the labour corps. By their participation in the war, their mental horizon had expanded greatly. They had also become politically conscious. The prices soared up after the war and peasants were fairly prosperous. The law allowed the zamindars to increase the rent by one anna in a rupee, once in seven years only. The zamindars, therefore, resorted to the eviction laws and started mass evictions. The land was farmed out again at higher rent and big sums were obtained as *nazarana*. A large number of Kisans were evicted in this fashion. Most of the Kisans had to borrow money on heavy interest rates from the *mahajans* to meet the exorbitant demands of the zamindars.

The demand for *nazarana* exasperated the Kisans. The Allahabad Kisan Sabha began to organise the Kisans. Shridhar Balwant Jodhpurkar who became famous as Baba Ramchandra was staying at that time in Jaunapur district and from there was carrying on propaganda among the Kisans of Pratapgadh district. In 1920 the activities of the Kisan Sabhas began to expand briskly. The Peasant's demands were:—(1) restriction on evictions, (2) restriction on forced labour, (3) stopping fines, and (4) stopping illegal exactions. The Kisans had to vow that—they would remain peaceful, they would not pay illegal exactions, they would not acquiesce in forced labour, they would sell the produce at the market-price, they would not pay *nazarana* even if the refusal invited eviction, no Kisan would accept an evicted field, and that they would not rest

till the eviction laws were repealed. Every Kisan had to take such fourteen vows.

From Pratapgadh the Kisan movement spread to southern *tehshils* of Rai Bareilli district. In 1921 the movement "came of age". Thousands flocked to the meetings. The Kisan agitation was absolutely free of communal differences—Hindus and Muslims, men and women were all identified with it. The Government and *taluqdars* were frightened at the awakening among the Kisans. On January 7, 1921 there was firing at Munshiganj—many Kisans were wounded. Firing checked, to some extent, the peasant agitation in Rai Bareilli. But the movement had by then spread in many districts of Oudh. The strongly organised Kisans compelled the Oudh officials to reconsider the rent-revenue legislations. Evictions by notice were stopped. The new law granted the Kisans tenure for life. At that time the Non-Co-operation movement was at its height. The Government did not want the Kisan agitation to get linked up with that movement. For this reason also the Government became more responsive to the Kisan demands. The main grievance of the Kisans was about evictions. As soon as that demand was conceded their enthusiasm for the N-C-O cooled down. The Congress was not then willing to fight for the economic demands of the Kisans though in its struggle the Congress assuredly desired the co-operation of the Kisans. By the bye the non-co-operation movement itself cooled down. In late 1921, the Kisan movement revived as "Eka Andolan" in the districts of Hordoi, Khiri, Sitapur and Lucknow. This movement was directed against the *taluqdars* and government officials. In these districts the *taluqdars* were exacting more than what they were legally entitled to—and that had caused widespread unrest among the Kisans. If a Kisan worker was apprehended, the Kisans would gather in their numbers and would ensure his release—such was their temper! They refused to pay more than the fixed rent. At various places they came in clash with the zamindar's agents.

There were two types of the Eka Sabhas: one dealing solely with economic questions, the other having a politi-

cal programme also. In their meetings resolutions about Swaraj, Swadeshi and the boycott of law-courts used to be discussed and carried. Pandit Janardan Joshi, who was at that time the Deputy Collector of Rai Bareilli, in his report said that the zamindars used to overcharge their tenants. In one instance a zamindar charged Rs. 9,500 over and above Rs. 77,000 that he was entitled to receive. Another zamindar who was entitled to a revenue of Rs. 32,000 used to collect Rs. 45,000. Mr. Joshi himself said: What wonder was there if the Kisans revolted against that rotten system! Mr. Kalsar I.C.S. pointed out another instance in which a zamindar charged Rs. 5,700 in lieu of Rs. 1,700! There were other grievances of the Kisans also. Everywhere Kisan Panchayats were set up and very often the Kisans came in clash with "law and order."

The Government endeavoured hard to put down the Kisan movement—and with increasing repression it, slowly, lost its strength. In 1932 the Congress launched a no-rent campaign. This struggle was quite strong in the district of Allahabad and Rai Barielli—elsewhere it failed to gather strength. In 1933 the Central Kisan Sangh was established at Allahabad. Its branches have been organised in some four districts. Organised work has not, as yet, got going. In other provinces also the Kisans have been restive. In Bihar there is a powerful Kisan organisation. The All-India Kisan Sabha has also been established. Its inaugural session met at Lucknow in April 1936. It is very desirable that the Congress-workers should organise the Kisans, in district after district, in Kisan Sanghas on the basis of their economic demands.

III

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE GUJARAT CONGRESS SOCIALIST CONFERENCE (1935)

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE GUJARAT CONGRESS SOCIALIST CONFERENCE (1935)*

COMRADES,

I AM indulging in a mere formality when I say that I am highly grateful to you for the honour you have done me by electing me as the President of your Provincial Conference. I know my shortcomings. I know that I do not possess the requisite knowledge of local problems that confront you and that accordingly I am not in a position to make any adequate contribution to many local questions that will surely engage your attention in this Conference. As a matter of fact, I hesitated for a long time before I could persuade myself to accept this honour; and let me tell you that it was your profound love for me which at last enabled me to overcome my diffidence; and I am here in response to your call to render all possible service that I may be capable of.

I hope with your co-operation it will be possible for me to conduct the deliberations of this Conference in such a way as may result in a clear enunciation of the Party's opinion on questions of topical interest; and, further, in a formulation of local tasks appropriate to conditions obtaining in your province. I further hope that we shall proceed in a businesslike manner and that our proceedings will be a challenge to the criticism that is often levelled against us that we simply indulge in tall talk and do not mean business.

Comrades, ever since its birth the Congress Socialist Party has been assailed from all sides and subjected to all sorts of criticisms, both from the right and the left. Some of these criticisms are utterly childish; some are based on ignorance or misconception of the Party's principles and

* Held at Ahmedabad June 23-24, 1935.

aims; some again have been hurled against us simply for the purpose of vilification; while there are others which are such as should command our attention. Of these latter some are purely destructive while others are of a helpful nature; and it is these constructive criticisms in particular which should be carefully noticed by us. I may say at once that we believe in a policy of self-criticism and that we shall always be prepared to correct the line when some mistake has been discovered. We do not subscribe to the wrong and mistaken policy of seeking shelter under the convenient phrase "the changing objective conditions" which can always come to our rescue when we want to extricate ourselves from a difficult situation in which we have landed ourselves without admitting at the same time that we have been wrong in the past. All genuine criticisms should be welcomed inasmuch as they afford an opportunity for self-review; and I shall try to answer some of them and in doing so shall incidentally state the Party's position.

An apt illustration of a puerile criticism coming from the left is that the Party has come into existence as a result of a conspiracy hatched by the bourgeoisie of the Congress which has split itself into two wings to deceive and mystify the masses and disrupt their struggle. The charge is that but for our intervention the flood-gates would have opened for our friends. The formula is so simple and naive that it can be invented only by a dullard who is incapable of understanding even a simple fact. I need not take into account further criticisms of a similar nature because they are so ludicrous that they need not be seriously considered. My only purpose in furnishing one example is to show to what extreme and ridiculous lengths some of our critics can go.

CRITICISMS OF CONGRESSMEN CONSIDERED

Criticisms coming from the right are generally of a two-fold nature. One criticism is that the Congress Socialists are first and foremost internationalists and as such cannot be wholly depended upon in the fight for independence. It is said that situations may arise in which we may be

persuaded to sacrifice the freedom of our country for the sake of socialism. Let me at once disarm the suspicion by stating emphatically that there is no antagonism between independence and socialism. As a matter of fact, socialism cannot be built without the conquest of power and in the present conditions of India the anti-Imperialist struggle is only a prelude to socialism. We are not lacking in national pride either. Of course we hate chauvinism and do not subscribe to the dictum "my country, right or wrong". Nor do we want to deprive other peoples of their inheritance but rather wish to cultivate friendly relations with them and build in co-operation a world society that is free from exploitation and oppression and is founded on free association of mankind.

Lest it should be doubted in certain quarters whether I am correctly stating the socialist position, I would like to fortify myself with the following passage from the writings of Lenin: "Is the emotion of national pride foreign to the Greater Russian class-conscious proletariat? Certainly not. We love our language and our native land.... We are filled with national pride and it is for that reason specially that we regard with a peculiar hatred our past serfdom..(and)..our present serfdom....A nation cannot itself be free whilst it oppresses other people—such was the teaching of the great representatives of logical democracy in the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels, who have become the teachers of the revolutionary proletariat. And we Greater Russian workmen, because we are filled with national pride, want to see a free and independent, a Democratic and Republican and proud Greater Russia whose relations with its neighbours shall be inspired by the humanitarian principle of equality and not by the servile principle of prior or exclusive rights degrading to every great nation."

Perhaps the criticism is based on the misunderstanding of a text of Marx that workers have no fatherland of their own. In this text Marx simply wants to point out to the workers that they are treated as pariahs in their own land and they have been dispossessed of the good things of life,

just to prove to them the necessity of winning power for themselves.

The other criticism is that we are disrupting the struggle for independence by raising the issue of class struggle at this stage. We may be forgiven for pointing out that under present conditions it is impossible to win independence without mobilising the workers and peasants for the political struggle. Unfortunately the Congress has hitherto not paid adequate attention to the question of reaching the masses with a correct approach. We do not accuse the Congress of any wilful neglect in the matter. On the contrary it is the only political body which has tried to establish contacts with the broad masses in the country. Yet its method of approach has not been correct and therefore its efforts have not been as fruitful as they would have been otherwise. A new orientation of policy is much needed in the Congress at the present juncture and it must be preceded by a recognition of the fact that there are definite classes to whom an economic appeal has to be made before they can be mobilised for political action and that they have to be organised on a class basis before they can be effectually used for an anti-imperialist struggle. In view of the fact that foreign imperialism has with the object of entrenching its position, formed a block with forces of native reaction, viz., the Indian princes, landlords and capitalists, it is all the more necessary for us to rally all the radical elements in the country and to build a united front of the petty bourgeoisie, the workers and the peasants in order to oppose this newly constituted block of imperialism and its native allies. The capitalist class in India is not capable of leading the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Capitalism long ago ceased to be a revolutionary force. In India its social basis is very narrow and therefore it cannot act singly. Besides, the feudal agrarian economy in India exercises an influence over all kinds of social relationship. Capitalism therefore is in alliance with the landlords and as such cannot be expected to destroy feudalism. Thus the exploited masses are under a historic necessity

to complete also the task that was executed in the West by the bourgeoisie.

The landlords in India are the creation of British rule and they naturally lean on imperialism for support. Barring individuals, they have as a class remained aloof from the national movement and as the class struggle develops they will more and more go over to the opposite camp. It is apparent that in future the burden of carrying on the struggle for independence will mainly have to be shouldered by workers, peasants and the lower middle class.

A keen appreciation of the correlation of forces in the country will show the inadequacy of the present programme of the Congress which badly requires a thorough overhauling. We should take a lesson from the past history of the Kuomintang, the national organisation of the Chinese people, which in its Reorganisation Conference held in the year 1924, decided henceforth to pay special attention to workers and peasants. The decision was carried into execution and special departments were soon opened to look after their interests. Peasants were organised in unions in every village and district, big landlords and money-lenders being rigidly excluded from membership. It was through these unions that the peasants' struggle against the economic and political power of the landlords was organised. The peasant movement spread like wild fire and in the course of only three years the membership in a single province counted in millions. The Chinese labour was also organised into trade unions and as a result of the work done amongst them it soon grew into a mighty political force.

It was due to this new programme of the Kuomintang that it could achieve such a phenomenal success in the revolution of 1926-27; and if its leadership had not turned anti-revolutionary, China would be a free country today, powerful enough to repel the attacks of Japanese imperialism and to ignore its threats with perfect equanimity.

It is sad to reflect that the Congress has persistently neglected industrial labour with the result that labour has

been estranged from the Congress. Unfortunately there is to be seen today not only indifference but positive antipathy towards the Congress in organised labour unions. The result is that the Congress is not in a position today to call to its aid political strikes of workers. There have been powerful labour strikes in the country but they have been generally of an economic character. The economic struggle of the workers has not yet passed into the political struggle. This is why labour is so weak today as a political force and weighs so little in the political scale. I am simply stating the present position as it strikes me. I do not for a moment minimise its importance as a revolutionary force nor do I deny that by an application of proper tactics it can easily develop into a mighty political force and can establish its hegemony over the national movement. This can be done only in one way under present Indian conditions. The workers should participate in the anti-imperialist struggle led by the Congress. In India, unlike Russia, the proletarian weapon of strike has not yet been the signal for mass action; but the working class can extend its political influence only when by using its weapon of general strike in the service of the national struggle it can impress the petty bourgeoisie with the revolutionary possibilities of a strike. Howsoever one may criticise and denounce the Congress, it is the only broad platform of anti-imperialist struggle in India, and it is the only centre today from which such a struggle can be conducted. It is the broad arena of mass struggle where workers and peasants can receive political education and enlarge their influence and prestige.

Unfortunately some of the working class leaders do not seem to accept this point of view. Ever since 1928 they have followed a policy of isolation and it is this suicidal policy which has isolated them not only from the working masses but also from the national struggle; and yet the wonder of wonders is that they claim to be the vanguard of the Indian revolution. Whenever the Congress has conducted an anti-imperialist struggle these leaders have been found not only keeping themselves aloof but also pre-

venting the workers from joining the struggle. Was it not a communist leader who pulled down the national flag at Bombay and thus unconsciously acted as an "agent of imperialism"?

If communism is unity of theory and practice, have not the communists of India played a destructive role during the last six years? Even in the trade union field they have tried to break the unity of workers by following the policy of dual unionism. I do not like to rake up an old matter because happily trade union unity has lately been restored with the communists though it is doubtful how long this unity is going to last. For I believe that the slogans of trade union unity and united front are given out in order to fight the growing menace of fascism and to secure the sympathy of workers of the world for Soviet Russia in the case of an outbreak of war. The Third International nowadays formulates policies which seem to be simply an extension of the domestic policy of Russia. Russia is anxious to postpone war and so the former exponent of world revolution has been compelled by the exigencies of her domestic situation to work for world peace. The League of Nations has suddenly become an instrument of peace. I do not blame Russia for entering the League nor do I blame it for entering into non-aggression and mutual assistance pacts with Imperialist Nations. I think the diplomatic needs of Russia justify such a course. But what I do not understand is the tying of the Third International to the chariot wheel of Soviet Russia. Should it not free itself from the undue domination exercised today by Russian communists? Let it think independently for itself, unswayed by the domestic policy of Russia; let it cease to dictate from above; and let it give freedom to its national branches to develop their own political strategy and tactics appropriate to conditions prevailing in each country. But today we find that independent thinking is discouraged; and everywhere they follow the facile line of mechanically applying tactics transported from Russia to their own country. It was a part of the general policy of isolation that the communists were instructed in 1928 to withdraw

themselves from all bourgeois organisations. I admit the experience of China has made them cautious; but if the revolution failed in China the failure was due again to the rigidity of the tactics that had been prescribed for their use. The initial entry into the Kuomintang was not wrong. The Communist Party of China itself will be the first to admit that if it had not close organisational connections with the national movement it would not have obtained wide possibilities of influencing the movement; and if it had followed a policy of isolation in the earlier days it would not have been able today to bring under its control about one-sixth of China. The necessary result of a policy of isolation is that a party gets itself isolated from the masses and soon becomes transformed into a narrow fossilised sect. A party that wants to establish its hegemony over the national movement must send its members to all the classes; and it is only in this way that its political influence can grow. Socialists must be found wherever the masses are; and they must be in the fore-front of every anti-imperialist action and every battle that is waged in the interests of the masses.

The Congress also should enlarge its influence by changing its attitude towards labour from one of indifference to that of active sympathy. It should organise trade unions under the aegis of the Trade Union Congress and should take steps to develop the peasantry into a gigantic anti-imperialist force. The foundation of the movement should be broadened and the classes that are the mainstay of the revolution should be properly organised for participating in the national struggle.

The A.I.C.C. has in one of its resolutions in the past admitted that the exploitation of the masses cannot cease unless a revolutionary change is made in the social structure; and when we ask the Congress to create organs of class struggle we simply ask it to start the process which will sooner or later bring about the change. The change can be brought about only by classes which are interested in initiating the change, and they cannot do so unless they are organised on the basis of their class demands and unless

their economic struggle is linked up with the movement for complete independence.

If we are really earnest about achieving independence and if we are sincere in our belief that the Swaraj that we visualize is the rule of the masses, there should be no difficulty for the Congress in accepting our programme of anti-imperialist struggle.

In this connection it is pertinent to point out that our resolutions which have been discussed in the Congress are not of a socialist character. I may be permitted to ask if such a character can be really ascribed to the anti-war resolution and other resolutions as regards entry into legislatures and parliamentary work. The mere fact that they are sponsored by socialists does not give them a different complexion. Even one so-called "socialist" resolution did not speak of socialism but sought to define what Swaraj would mean for the masses.

While I am on this subject I think I should say a few words in connection with the interview recently given at Bombay by the worthy President of the Indian National Congress.

I am pained to find that our President holds the opinion that we are acting in a way which necessarily leads to lowering the prestige of the Congress in the public eye. I regret to say that a great injustice has been inadvertently done to us by our President. We have declared it so many times from our platforms and the Congress platform—and I repeat the declaration today—that we want to enhance the prestige of the Congress and that we shall do all that lies in our power to build it into a powerful organisation and to make it a fit instrument for conducting the anti-imperialist struggle. Expressions of opinion—different from those held by the orthodox school, and criticisms of the present policies of the Congress—can in no way be regarded as an attempt to lower the dignity of the Congress. We regard ourselves as custodians of the Congress honour and it is for this reason that we want the Congress to keep firm to the path which it chalked out for itself at the momentous session of Lahore in 1929 and to develop

correct tactics and methods of struggle which may lead to speedy success. We think we are acting within our rights in trying to check the reactionary tendencies which have lately manifested themselves within the Congress and we hope that our President does not mean to take away from us the important and well-recognised right of all minorities to propagate their views and to convert the minority into a majority.

I hope I have disposed of the principal criticisms advanced against us by Congressmen. I shall now try to answer such criticism of the ultra-leftists as have come to my knowledge.

CRITICISMS OF THE ULTRA-LEFT ANSWERED

It is indeed very difficult to meet an opponent in argument who for reasons best known to him chooses to carry on insidious propaganda against you but refuses to come out in the open with his criticism. There is, however, one criticism of the ultra-leftist nature which has appeared in the press and which deserves attention. The substance of this criticism is that as socialism is the special task of the proletariat it is only the workers' party that can build it; and that to accomplish the task it must act as an independent class force and must have an independent political organisation. It is urged that the Congress Socialist Party is organisationally connected with the Congress which is a national organisation consisting of elements drawn from all classes and has no independent existence and therefore it cannot be expected to perform the task which it says it has set before itself.

This criticism obviously does not take into account the circumstances in which the Congress Socialist Party has come into existence and it further ignores the general political conditions of the country.

The reasons why the Party is within the Congress are not far to seek. The Party has come into existence as a result of a group of Congressmen in the course of the struggle. They came under the impact of the socialist thought of the world. They saw that a crisis had come

over democracy in the West and that parliamentary institutions were crumbling on all sides. They also saw that 'the fascist menace was growing apace, that capitalism was in a decadent condition and had entered its last stage of imperialism. They saw clearly that the choice before the world now lay between fascism and socialism and that capitalist democracy seemed to have no future before it. They found the world in the midst of a grave economic crisis which did not seem to end. They found that it was Russia alone which had made substantial advances towards socialism and that in the midst of the surrounding gloom it was the only hope of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden for whom it was a great inspiration today because it is a precursor of a new era for the masses of humanity. Having studied the history of revolutions in other countries they came to the conclusion that the programme of the Congress should be fundamentally altered in order to achieve complete independence. The dire necessity of the anti-imperialist struggle led to their conversion and they quite rightly desired to develop the Congress platform for an anti-Imperialist struggle.

As such there was no question of our leaving the Congress. The responsibility for our organising a separate party should be laid at the door of others. If there had been a genuine working class party in the country applying correct tactics to Indian conditions and employing right methods of work, if it had not isolated itself from the masses and the national struggle, if it had rooted itself in the soil and had followed the maxim that "the fundamental principles should be applied in such a manner as will correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, will properly adapt, and apply them to national differences," if it had not to the contrary allowed itself to become the mere tail-end of an outside organisation which because of its short-sighted tactics and its bureaucratic control has lost much of its former prestige and influence, there would not have been the need of a separate organisation. The Party uses the platform of the Congress for carrying on the anti-imperialist struggle. It organises the

peasants into unions and workers into trade unions and is acting in full co-operation with the A.I.T.U.C. in the trade union field. The Party is thus engaged among the masses and the more it identifies itself with them and wins their confidence by actual and concrete work the more it will be able to extend its influence among them.

We are steadily gathering force and we claim that in a brief space of time we have succeeded in creating a favourable atmosphere for socialism and in winning a large measure of support of the rank and file for our programme of anti-imperialist action. In course of time we may be able to amend the rule which confines the membership of the Party to Congressmen only. It is possible that in the fullness of time all the socialist groups might be combined into one single party. But until that day arrives we must be content to work through our separate organizations, trying at the same time to co-operate on issues on which we can agree to act together.

I am informed that our socialism is represented as fake socialism perhaps because of our affiliation with the Congress and surprise is expressed at our suddenly growing into socialists, thus throwing doubts on the genuineness of our conversion. In support of this plea it is further said that those who have so long remained under the spell of Gandhism cannot possibly be expected to accept socialism. This observation is more true of the working class which left to itself can attain only the trade union consciousness. We must not forget that the theory of socialism arose independently of the labour movement and it came into being as the "natural and inevitable consequence of the intellectual development of the revolutionary socialist mind."

I understand the ultra-leftists have produced a minimum programme of anti-Imperialist action and they want to make it the basis of their united front activities. This programme is not at all a fighting programme and is grossly inadequate for achieving success in the anti-imperialist struggle. There is no mention of organising the masses against their native exploiters. The economic demands of the workers and peasants that are incorporated in the pro-

gramme are of a trivial nature and of a reformist character and large masses cannot be mobilised for the anti-imperialist struggle on the basis of such petty demands.

A CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL EXAMINED

The role of the Congress Socialist Party has been recently discussed in a Bombay paper. The writer discusses the question with sympathy and welcomes the Party but suggests that the Party can be effective only if it liquidates itself and merely functions as the left wing of the Congress. It is stated that the Congress cannot be expected to accept socialism as its objective and that therefore the talk of socialism within the Congress would render a positive disservice to the cause of the anti-imperialist struggle. I personally agree that the Congress is not a platform for socialism and its main task is to develop the anti-imperialist struggle. But we should not forget that under present conditions such a struggle can only develop if we succeed in linking it up with the economic demands of the masses and this object can only be achieved if there is a party within the Congress that persistently agitates for the acceptance of an economic programme. I also hold that there is an urgent necessity for carrying on an incessant propaganda for socialism amongst the Congress workers, for, the more we succeed in this direction, the better are the chances for the acceptance by the Congress of an effective programme of anti-imperialist struggle. And for this reason, if for no other, the Party must continue to function. This urgent and much needed task cannot be performed by a diffused group and I think our experience of the last twelve months amply justifies the course that we have followed. There remains the further question of our reconsidering the policy we have so far followed within the Congress. I have already expressed my opinion that it does require a slight though an important modification and I have also pointed the direction in which this change should be introduced. I am aware that the matter is receiving the attention of the Party and I hope that if the Party is convinced that a change in its policy

is demanded by circumstances it will surely take the necessary steps in that connection.

THE REALITY OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION

It is absolutely necessary that we should fully grasp the true purpose of the new Constitution Act. We should try to understand why the British imperialists are so anxious to force down this measure of reforms although it has been condemned by all the political parties in the country. The inwardness of the situation is that in order to crush the growing revolt of the masses and to keep in check the rising tide of the national struggle it has become necessary for imperialism to strengthen its ties with its old allies and to seek new allies within the country and thus enlarge its social basis so that it may be better able to operate against its opponents. The new constitution has been forged to form a united front of imperialism and forces of native reaction. This is why so much stress has been laid on the establishment of a Federation of Indian States and Provinces. The difficulties of establishing such an All-India Federation are obvious. The Indian States are altogether different in status and character from the Provinces of British India and they are not prepared to federate on the same terms as it is proposed to apply to the Provinces. And yet a Federation composed of disparate units has been proposed and all the difficulties have been disregarded because it well serves imperial interests. In the words of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, "the presence in the Central Executive and Legislature of representatives of the Princes who have always taken so keen an interest in all matters will be weighed and considered with a full appreciation of the issues at stake." The "grave matters" referred to in the above quotation relate to the possible danger of friction between the Governor-General and the Legislature over the Army Budget. The Committee goes so far as to say that there can be no case for introducing responsibility at the centre in a purely British India Federation.

The Legislators have proceeded on the safest hypothesis and have guarded the Constitution in all possible manner. The Constitution has been hedged in on all sides with so many safeguards that it is only a mockery to call it a constitution, conferring a large measure of reasonable government.

In the provincial sphere also there will be bi-cameral legislatures in those provinces where landlordism, a special creation of British rule, prevails. The second chambers are being created to enable propertied classes to defeat, delay or revise any piece of legislation which in their opinion is ill-considered and is prejudicial either to their own interests or to those of imperialism.

The franchise for the Second Chamber will be based on high property qualifications or a qualification based on service in certain distinguished public offices. Special interests like landlordism, commerce and industry have been further protected by giving them an adequate representation. It is difficult to understand why in an agricultural country where the economic and political power is wielded by landlords in rural areas, landlordism is treated as a special interest to which special seats may also be allotted.

The "vested interests" have received special protection and it is recommended that all grants of land held under various names such as Jagir, Taluk, Inam, Watan and Muafi and the rights enjoyed by Talukdars of Oudh under Sanads will be respected and it will be beyond the powers of legislature and executives to propose any modification of such rights without obtaining the prior consent of the Governor-General or the Governor as the case may be.

The Constitution will further safeguard all private property against expropriation except under very special circumstances and that too, in case of property of a specific character, on payment of adequate compensation; and general legislation proposing transfer to public ownership of some particular class of property or extinction or modification of rights of individuals in it shall require the previous sanction of the Governor-General or Governor to its introduction. In any case in which the rights are modified

or certain property is expropriated, compensation will have to be paid for the interests so affected by the proposed legislation. In the case of the permanently settled provinces it has been enacted that if a bill to amend the land revenue system is passed by the Legislature the Governor should be instructed to reserve it for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure.

Thus it would be almost impossible to secure any social legislation worth the name for the benefit of the masses through the new legislatures. The agrarian problem is growing more and more acute everyday. The price of land is falling off, and the already little surplus which the agriculturist had, has vanished by the abnormal fall in prices of agricultural produce. The level of subsistence is falling below the starvation point. The agrarian problem demands a radical solution and if nothing substantial is done to improve the peasant's lot his condition will go from bad to worse. But the vested interests in land have been scrupulously safeguarded in the new constitution and the modification of the landlord's status or curtailment of his privileges are not allowed. There is not a single proposal to safeguard the real interest of the masses and this is as it should be because we should not forget that the basis of imperialism is the exploitation of the masses subjected to its yoke in its colonial possessions. The imperialism at home confronted by an economic crisis of the first order could only weather the storm by large reduction in wages and doles of the unemployed at home and by extorting extra profits from its colonial possessions.

India, like China, is a land of small peasants. The peasantry is steeped in heavy indebtedness. The fragmentation of his holdings, the utter inadequacy of his resources to make technical improvements in agriculture, the abnormal fall in prices of agricultural produce, the high rents on land and so many illegal and extra dues the peasant has to pay makes him a pathetic figure in the whole situation. The workers' standard of living is being attacked. Their level of subsistence is appallingly low. A large number of workers is being thrown out of employment

every day. The petty bourgeoisie are also being pauperised. The educated young men of the middle class do not find any employment and there are so many cases of suicide reported everyday of able-bodied young men who are driven to acts of desperation for their inability to earn their living by honest work. Nothing is done to prevent this appalling waste of human life, to mitigate this human misery visible on all sides, and if people's representatives want to find a solution of the problem of poverty they are not allowed to do so in the name of the sacred institution of property.

The Constitution is further designed to suppress the freedom of the people; and although in the Provinces, Law and Order will be transferred subjects, yet the reservation of large powers in the hands of the Inspector-General of Police in the matter of internal organisation and discipline of the police force is certainly inconsistent with responsible government in the Provinces. The Police Rules and the Statutes on which these Rules are based will not be amended without the Governor's consent. It is further provided that no records relating to intelligence affecting terrorism should be disclosed to any one other than such persons within the Provincial Police Force as the Inspector-General may direct, or such other public officers outside that Force as the Governor may direct. The Indian Ministers will not thus be able to satisfy themselves whether the information on the basis of which a prosecution has been started is trustworthy or not. And as the recruitment of the superior Police Force will continue to be made by the Secretary of State and as a special responsibility is laid on the Governor to keep the Police Force free from political influences and safeguard their 'legitimate' interest, it will not be possible for Indian Ministers to exercise any control on high police officers and for the matter of that on the Police Force in general. The Police have been further indemnified for all their past acts and no civil or criminal proceeding can be instituted against the Police in respect of acts done in good faith and done or purported to be done in the execution of duty. The existing police zulum will

thus continue unchecked and unmitigated by the Indian Ministers.

The Provincial services will be regarded as Crown services and the Governor will be recognized as their head. Their interests will be adequately protected by the Statute and the ever watchful Governor will be there in the exercise of his special responsibility to see that their rights and privileges do not suffer in any manner. Appointments to these services would run in the name of the Governor and no public servant will be subject to dismissal save by the order of the Governor.

In the matter of appointments made by the Secretary of State, control will be exercised by him over the conditions of service of such officers. In short the Services will not be under the control of the ministers except in a general manner.

The Governor shall have a special responsibility in respect of any grave menace to the peace and tranquillity of the Province and large powers are vested in him to enable him to discharge these responsibilities in a proper manner. In due discharge of his special responsibilities, the Governor has not only the right to overrule his ministers but has also special powers to enable him to execute any course of action which requires legislative provision or the provision of supply. He can issue any executive order and can dismiss and replace the minister or ministers if he or they are unwilling to administer their charge on lines recommended by the Governor. The Governor can in that case also suspend the constitution by proclamation and can assume to himself all such powers as he may think necessary. Special powers are also given to him for combating terrorism and in the exercise of such powers he can, if necessary, assume charge of any branch of Government for combating such activities. He can also create, if he so likes, a new machinery for the purpose.

Under "grave menaces" are included not only terrorism and other subversive movements, for the Report points out that "there are many other branches of administration in which ill-advised measures may give rise to a menace

to the peace or tranquillity of the Province; and we can readily conceive circumstances in connection with land revenue or public health, to mention no others, which might well have this effect." Thus, if in the opinion of the Governor any particular measure affecting the land revenue constitutes a menace to the peace of the Province, he can take action under his special powers with respect to any department of Government. He will also have supplies necessary for the discharge of his special responsibilities.

Elections to the Federal Legislature will be indirect contrary to unanimous Indian opinion which favours direct elections. Dyarchy will be introduced at the centre and the Indian Finance Minister will have control of only 20 p. c. of his budget. The Governor-General will have special responsibilities like those of the Governor in the Province.

A Statutory Railway Board will be set up and entrusted with the actual administration of Railways in India. The Board will be practically independent of the Federal Legislature.

British commercial interests will be protected and the Governor-General will have added to his special responsibilities the responsibility of 'preventing measures, legislative or administrative, which would subject British goods imported into India from the United Kingdom, to discriminatory or penal treatment.' The principle is laid down that the United Kingdom and India must approach their trade problem in a spirit of reciprocity. The British shipping will not be subjected by law in British India to any discrimination whatsoever. Companies incorporated in the United Kingdom should, when trading in India, be deemed to have complied with the provisions of Indian Law relating to certain matters, though companies which engage in trade or industry subsequent to the date of the constitution will have to be incorporated under Indian Law and will have further to satisfy certain conditions before they can be eligible for the grant of bounties and subsidies.

The proposed constitutional changes would involve an additional recurring expenditure which will impose fresh burdens on the Indian taxpayer. Subventions will have to be granted from federal revenues to the deficit provinces and the establishment of the Federal Court, Provincial Autonomy and the enlargement of legislatures and electorates will also add to the recurring cost of administration.

This sham Constitution will only serve to add to the burdens of the taxpayer and will forge fresh chains for our enslavement. The provincial resources will be so slender that no Indian Minister will be in a position to develop nation-building departments.

Before we conclude our criticism of the new Constitution it is necessary to notice two more proposals in the new scheme. I mean the proposals to transfer Aden to the British Government and to separate Burma from India. The strategic value of Aden to Britain is of great importance and the transfer is proposed chiefly on the ground that it is of great value to the Empire in the East as a whole from the strategic standpoint. In the case of Burma different considerations were present. Burma is economically rich in oil, lead, tin and timber.

From the above analysis of the proposals it is clear that the new constitution is a retrograde measure designed to strengthen imperial interests and to tighten further Britain's iron grip on India.

OUR PLEA FOR WRECKING

It was but natural for the Congress to signify its intention to reject this sham constitution which is only a device to perpetuate British domination in India. It would have been much better if reasons for its rejection had been fully and well stated and the real character of the White Paper proposals had been brought out in Congress resolutions. The Congress also stated its considered opinion that the only satisfactory alternative was a constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. But the thing that really matters is to see how

this policy of rejection is to be carried out. In our opinion the only possible, honourable and consistent course open to rejectionists after this declaration is to follow a policy of determined resistance and obstruction and to make it impossible for the new constitution to work. A policy of rejection necessarily implies refusal to accept ministerial and other offices in the gift of the Government. It is only in this way that we can expose the hollowness of the constitution and compel its suspension. We must realise that the new constitution impedes our progress towards our goal and the sooner the obstacle is removed from our path the speedier would be our progress.

It would not have been necessary for me to dilate on this subject if the Parliamentary Board had followed in the Assembly the old tradition of the Swaraj Party and if an insidious propaganda had not been started by certain responsible individuals in favour of working the reforms.

When the Swaraj Party was revived at Ranchi in 1934 the policy and programme which it adopted was significantly silent on the question of acceptance of office and the whole programme was conceived in a spirit of working the Reforms. It clearly demonstrated the great change that had come over the mentality of our parliamentarians after the liquidation of the Civil Disobedience movement. Perhaps the defeat the country had sustained in the struggle and the absence of an atmosphere of civil resistance in the country had emboldened them to give up the old tactics of obstruction. The general mentality of the Parliamentary Board and the inability of its representatives in the Assembly to remain faithful to their election pledges and their eagerness to obtain easy though empty victories over the Government by agreeing to give up their professions and principles in order to enable them to secure the cooperation of the other parties in the Assembly—all these combined do not encourage us to hope that there will be any determined effort to secure the rejection of the reforms.

On the other hand, a favourable atmosphere is being silently created for the working of the reforms and the

mind of the nation is being steadily prepared step by step for the acceptance of such a policy. The silence that is being maintained on all sides is certainly strengthening the hands of those who advocated such a policy.

In a period of reaction it is all the more necessary to be cautious and circumspect lest the more forward and active should steal a march over you and confront you with more or less accepted decisions. Delay is always dangerous on such occasions and he who acts with alacrity and resoluteness has the best chance of success. Therefore, if we do not at once mobilise public opinion in favour of a wrecking policy all will be lost. The rank and file must quickly assert itself, take a decisive attitude and make it known to those in authority that no tampering with the policy of rejection will be tolerated by it.

The future of the Congress will much depend on the decision of this single question. The whole movement stands in danger of being deflected from its revolutionary path; and if the Congress is again made to travel the old barren path of constitutionalism and reformism it will land itself into a morass from which it will not be possible for it to extricate itself.

The question is one of great importance and its decision should not be left in the hands of the Parliamentary Board. The Congress should give a clear mandate without any equivocation.

A special pleading for a wrecking policy should not be needed in the case of a party pledged to complete independence. A party working for complete independence can at no stage enter into a compromise with imperialism. It has to carry on the struggle relentlessly until the goal is reached. It should in no case take upon itself the responsibility of working a constitution imposed by the British Parliament whose authority to frame a constitution for India has been challenged by the Congress.

Last, but not the least, the acceptance of ministerial offices, whether for working the reforms or for wrecking them, will certainly sow an illusion in the minds of the people that the new constitution has some intrinisic worth

and it will thus unconsciously change the psychology of the whole nation in favour of a constitutional struggle.

CONCLUSION

Comrades, India holds the key in her hands to the liberation of many countries in the East. Because of Britain's imperial interests in India the territories lying between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf are of vital concern to Great Britain. If Egypt's independence is not complete and British troops guard the Suez Canal it is because it commands the sea route to Britain's Indian possessions. Britain maintains air bases in Iraq and guards them with troops because it is interested in maintaining the inviolability of her air communications with India.

Those countries in the East which are in bondage to British imperialism know full well that India's freedom means their own freedom and it is for this reason that they have always looked up to India for political guidance. The Indian national movement has made a deep impression upon these countries and they have more or less made use of Congress tactics in their struggle for freedom.

A realisation of the fact that we are custodians of the liberties of so many peoples should inspire us to action and we should see that the national movement is soon liberated from its reactionary tendencies. Our presence in the Congress should be a guarantee that it will follow a right course of action but this is possible only if we play our part well. Let us by our exemplary conduct and by constructive work among the masses broaden the basis of our struggle and thereby win the deliverance of our people and strengthen the progressive forces in all countries of the East.

IV

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

1 THE SPEAKER (1937)
2 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (1937)
3 LESSONS OF THE CRISIS (1938)
4 TO THE STATES PEOPLE (1939)
5 THE CONGRESS CONSTITUTION (1939)

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM



The Speaker (1937)

[Babu Purshottamdas Tandon was unanimously elected speaker of the U.P. Legislative Assembly on 31st July, 1937. He was warmly felicitated by all parties in the House. In his speech Acharya Narendra Deva not only offered congratulations to his distinguished colleague but also expressed the hope that he would evolve new conventions for the Speaker and continue to take part actively in India's struggle for Independence. The speech was made in the U.P. Legislative Assembly—Editor].

MR. SPEAKER, it is with great pleasure that I associate myself with the sentiments that have been expressed by the Leader of my party in congratulating you on your elevation to this exalted office. By its unanimous vote this House has appointed you as its spokesman and has constituted you as the custodian and guardian of the rights and privileges of this House. You are the first speaker of this Chamber and I am sure, Sir, that everyone of us has full confidence in your fairness and in your judgment. Being a junior it is not for me to dwell on your virtues and distinctions, but I want to make it clear that here I am not speaking in my individual capacity. I am speaking as the President of the Congress organisation in these provinces and in the name of thousands of Congress workers who are scattered all over the province. I again speak, Sir, in the name of millions of Indian people residing in this province who by recording their votes in favour of Congressmen at the last elections registered their confidence in us and who further gave us mandate to follow

the policy and programme in legislatures which was adumbrated in the election manifesto of the Congress. I want to assure the minority groups in this House that it will be our special duty to see that fairness and justice are meted out to them and I want them to note, Sir, that it will be the special endeavour of the Congress Party to see that they get a real chance to speak on every matter which is discussed here, that they get a real opportunity to ventilate their grievances and that they get all the information that they wish to elicit from the Government. I hope you will always assist us in this task and I wish to give them this assurance that you will always have our support and co-operation in this matter. But there is an important point to which I would like to draw your special attention. It has already been placed before you by the Hon'ble the Leader of the House and I think, Sir, that it is the unanimous wish of the Party to which I have the honour to belong that you should refuse to be guided by the traditions that are followed in the foreign democratic countries of the West. I am in perfect agreement with the Honourable Leader of the Muslim League Party that you should evolve a new conception of the Speaker's office, establish a new tradition and strike a new line of policy for this House. In stating this I am placing before you the considered opinion of the Congress Party. Before deciding this matter you have to take stock of the whole situation as it exists today in India and also to note the fact that we have to march onwards in the battle of freedom. It is not a time for any Indian to keep away from the battlefield. We cannot afford to lose your valuable guidance and advice at a critical juncture like this and after all, Sir, in the view of the Congress this programme in legislatures is only an infinitesimal part of the entire programme. We stand for complete independence. We are a national organisation. We are not a sectional organisation, and in any case we cannot be considered to represent any single community or a section of vested interests. We are here to represent the entire population of India and whether the minority groups agree with me or not we claim to represent them also. I

want to emphasise the fact that the Congress is not a sectional organisation. It always seeks and honestly and conscientiously seeks to discover the will of Indian people as a whole and to give expression to it. I know, Sir, that those who do not happen to see eye to eye with us on many questions do realise that it is the great Indian National Congress which has raised the dignity of the Indian people in the eyes of the world. It is due to the Indian National Congress that Indians are respected today abroad. I ask you, Sir, Why it is that India is in the forefront of the world politics today? If you open the pages of any foreign newspaper, whether published in America or elsewhere in the western countries, you will find that India is being mentioned constantly. It is the Congress which has raised our status and has raised us in the opinion of the world. I will ask you, Sir, to keep this thing before you and also to take into consideration the fact that the constitution which we are asked to work has been forced upon us in the teeth of universal opposition and that we want to end it at the earliest moment and replace it by a constitution based on the independence of India. Therefore, Sir, I would request you to strike a new line and evolve a new tradition and to give us a new lead which will be followed by people who may be similarly circumstanced like us. But I would like to make it perfectly clear that I do not want you to use your influence and your position in building up the political fortunes of your party. Fullest freedom must be given to every political group and every individual in this House to express his views. I think, Sir, it will be very sad indeed if you decide to leave the political organisation to which you belong and if you decide, Sir, to cease to be a political leader so long as you occupy this chair. I have intimated to you the earnest wish of the Party and I have no doubt that in this matter you will take all the facts into consideration and decide upon the course which will best commend itself to you. I need say nothing more. Sir, once again, with your permission, I would tender my felicitations and I would offer my most sincere and warm congratulations to you on your elevation to this high office.

2

Constituent Assembly (1937)

[The Indian Constituent Assembly is scheduled to meet at an early date. It is therefore of particular interest to note how the idea of the Constituent Assembly has grown in Indian politics. In 1937 the U.P. Legislative Assembly, like other provincial legislatures debated the following resolution.

"This Assembly is of opinion that the Government of India Act, 1935, in no way represents the will of the nation and is wholly unsatisfactory as it has been designed to perpetuate the subjection of the people of India. The Assembly demands that this should be replaced and replaced by a constitution for a free India framed by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise, which allows the Indian people full scope for developments according to their needs and desires."

Notice for moving this resolution was given by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the Premier of U.P. In his absence it was moved by Smt. Vijayalaxmi Pandit (Minister for Local Self-Government).

Two amendments of special interest moved to this resolution were on behalf of the Muslim League and the Independent Party (Zamindars).

The Muslim League amendment moved by Mr. Muhammad Ismail Khan read as follows, "Provided that in the absence of an agreed settlement the measure and method of representation of the Muslims to the Constituent Assembly shall be the same as that provided in the Communal Award and provided further that the Constituent Assembly shall not be competent to alter or vary the personal law or the exisiting civil, political and religious rights of the Muslims without the consent of three-fourths of the Muslim representatives."

The other amendment championed by Nawab Dr. Sir Muhammad Ahmad Said Khan ran: "Provided that landlords, depressed classes and other minority communities shall receive adequate and special representation on the Constituent Assembly and that the Constituent Assembly shall not interfere with lawful and legitimate rights and interests in private property."

Acharya Narendra Deva in his speech (4th September, 1937) gives a lucid exposition of the social content behind the idea of the Constituent Assembly. He also made an effective reply to the two amendments.—Editor.]

ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA: Sir, before I proceed with the debate on this resolution, I feel it necessary to enter a caveat. You know, Sir, that this resolution has been placed before this House in accordance with the mandate of the Congress. There seems to be some doubt and misapprehension about this resolution, The resolution is not as simple as it seems to be. It involves complicated and intricate ideas. Before a vote of the House is taken on this question I would like to state for the information of my honourable friends Opposite that the Congress stands for complete independence and independence means severance from all British connexion. We do not subscribe to the doctrine of imperialism. We know that this imperialism is only a decadent form of capitalism and if we want to build a new social order and to remove the present gross inequalities in our society, we should open out a new era of progress and culture not only for the aristocracy but also for the masses. A gentleman on the other side has told us that he stands for democracy but that he is against socialism. My friend seems to forget that socialism alone stands for fullest democracy. Democracy of the capitalist order is a sham democracy. Political democracy is meaningless and farcical unless it is accompanied by economic equality and unless it stands for the economic emancipation of the masses. We want fullest democracy for the

vast masses of our people and not only for a few classes. We want to make available to our poor people the treasures of knowledge which have been inherited by us from past generations. We want to remove all inequalities in the matter of economic life. Therefore it is socialism alone which stands for full democracy. A change has come over our society in many matters and new elements have been introduced in the body politic. If the decadent classes want to increase their lease of life they must take note of the change and adjust themselves accordingly. I want to state on behalf of the Congress organisation that the Congress wants to make it emphatically clear that it does not want any imperialist hold over India. It stands for the emancipation of the people while imperialism stands for exploitation of the masses and for all the barbarous practices which are associated with fascism which is only an expression of imperialism in its last stage of decay. The reactionary forces in the world are standing in the way of further advance and progress. They are naturally anxious to maintain themselves and to increase their length of life and therefore they have recourse to methods which can be truly called barbaric. Therefore we do not stand for imperialism. When I say this I do not mean that we are at war with the British people. I love the British people and I want that Indians should initiate their virtues. What I am against is the system and not the people. We are not actuated by feelings of bitterness. We have no quarrel with the British people. The British people as such are not ruling over us but it is a small oligarchy in England wielding economic power which is the real governing class. I want to state it once more that the Congress is wedded to the policy of destruction of British imperialism. We however wish to retain friendly relations with Britain if that be possible and if our interests demand, but we must have absolute freedom to shape our own destiny according to our needs and desires.

The second point I would like to emphasise is our attitude towards the Constituent Assembly. A gentleman on the other side has moved an amendment—a very small

amendment, as he characterised it. He wants to incorporate one single word and that word is "immediate". It sounds so modest and so pleasant. They want us to accept it. But if you analyse it carefully you will find that this amendment is not so simple as it looks. That single word would negative the whole idea that lies behind this resolution. We do not want that this Constituent Assembly should be summoned by British Parilament. We refuse to have anything to do with the British Parliament in the framing of our economic and political structure. So, Sir, take it from me, that the Constituent Assembly is a thing which can only be created in a semi-revolutionary situation. We should have an Assembly which will be able to see that the will of the people is carried out, and it is possible only when we become independent of the British Government. We have to mobilise the masses and organise them so that we may be able to bring about a revolution, non-violent of course. That revolution will lead to the convocation of an Assembly. The Constituent Assembly means an Assembly which has the *power* to frame or amend its constitution. We want to generate that power so that the demand of the people may become irresistible and may not be spurned by others. We do not make any demand upon the British Government. We simply give notice to the British Government that the Constituent Assembly is going to be our slogan in the future and that it represents the ideals and aspirations of the Indian people. We want to indicate to the Government that that is the road on which we want to travel and that we do not want to deflect from this revolutionary path. I know, Sir, that various factors have contributed to make the discussion somewhat unreal and I admit that the Government also has had its due share in it. I can very well realise the difficulties of the Government in this matter. I know that the Government has its own limitations. It has to exercise a good deal of caution; it has to be reticant on many occasions. It has to be soft and sweet and then it has to satisfy so many interests. It has to win the confidence of those who are in opposition. The influence of

the place is also inevitable. You, Sir, have given them the right side of the House. The right side of the House has always been associated with those who have been friends in tradition of the privileged classes. It seems to me that the Government have been influenced by this new environment. But the rank and file of the Congress party suffer from no such limitations. I am not surprised at the attitude of the Opposition in this matter. The old Nationalist Agriculturist Party always stood for reaction. It tried to mislead the masses but the masses refused to be misled. Nawab Sir Muhammad Yusuf said that British Imperialism could be converted into British Commonwealth. But this task is as impossible of achievement as it is to convert a taluqdar into a true agriculturist. The big zamindars adopted this name thinking that it was a very auspicious name and would serve their purpose well. Their prophecy, however, was falsified and they suffered a big rout in elections. Their political fortunes are at their lowest ebb and I have my sympathies with them. You have been generous to them in letting them have a place which they now occupy under your behest. The Opposition is given the left side of the House which is associated in history with the defence of the right of the people. You did your best, Sir, to rehabilitate them in the public eye but unfortunately for them they refused to be influenced by their environment and take advantage of the new situation. They openly came out as opponents of the right of the people. I find the Nationalist Agriculturist Party has been rechristened as "Independent Party." May I appeal to the party to be true to the spirit and letter of that name? They must vote for the independence of India which means severing of the British connexion. I want to tell them that if they want to become an active force in Indian politics, if they want that their opinions should count in the counsels of the nation they should range themselves on the side of progress and we shall all welcome them. We do not expect them to advance rapidly on the new road. Let them walk slowly and steadily on the road which is indicated to them and we shall be satisfied. We know that

they have made some advance already. They were compelled to advance a step owing to the exigencies of elections. I would like them to go a little further. Sir, I would like to tell them that a new idea has been born in this land and that has come to stay. It has passed the stage of infancy. It has grown in manhood. It is going to live and live in a rich measure. As it is a social idea it will soon acclaim its fulfilment. If they want to move in the advanced times let them join the fold of those who stand for freedom. If they cannot do so let them choose their own course but in no case they should come in our way and prove an obstacle. It has been said by Sir Nawab Mahammad Yusuf that socialism is the product of the West and that must be rejected as such. The idea of democracy has also come from the West and we have accepted it without criticism. We are simply enamoured of the British Parliamentary practice without, however, thinking for a moment that it is an exotic plant which is not indigenous to the soil. But that system in the West now demands a radical change. We, however, hesitate to change it. We hesitate to accept a new proposition.

Now, Sir, it has been said that the zamindars of this province have been paragons of virtue. They have sacrificed a great deal for the people and for their country. They claim to be their *mabaps*. But they have been disowned and their title to act as natural leaders of the people has been repudiated. The peasantry have practically declared that they have no confidence in them. The masses are in motion and the traditional hegemony of these *taluqdars* and big zamindars seems to be at an end. And when the zamindars ask us that their privileges should be preserved and maintained intact, even without the slightest modification, they seem to forget the origin of their own titles. They are the creatures of British rule. The Oudh Estates Act, under which estates were conferred on the *taluqdars* of Oudh on the reoccupation of Oudh after the Mutiny, laid down conditions of loyalty and service to the Government. I regard the *sanads* as so many charters of slavery for them. They, however, regard them as their *magna charta.*

It has been made clear in the Act itself that the Government reserved to itself the right to protect the peasants from extortion. If we are to protect their interests, are we not to protect the interests of the masses, the interests of the vast millions of our people? Therefore we say that we can give no assurance that their present privileges would not be touched. We do not want to tie the hands of the coming generations. It would be simply futile on our part to make such an attempt. The *Statesman* of Calcutta, an Anglo-Indian daily which is not a friend of the Congress has said that the land system in this country is the greatest inequity on this planet. We want to get rid of this inequality as soon as possible.

Now, Sir, I would like to say a few words about the amendment which has been moved on behalf of the Muslim League Party. I know, Sir, and it is my sincere belief that the various communal groups in this land whether they belong to Hindu or Muslim community think more and more of their own narrow and sectional class interests and they do not think much about the broad questions in which the Hindu and Muslim masses are vitally interested. The more important questions are relegated to the background. They think about their petty necessities of life. They do not care for the masses.

Shaikh Muhammad Habibullah: What about the bankers who belong to the Congress?

Acharya Narendra Deva: I have heard a good deal about it and I know that the zamindars want to improve the lot of the agriculturists by shifting their burden to the shoulders of the money-lenders. I admit that some of the suffering of the tenants are due to the burdens which are imposed upon them by the money-lenders. It is said that the tenant is born in debt, lives in debt and dies in debt. But I will not absolve the landholders from their large share of the responsibility in the matter. The feudal landlords say that moneylenders and usurers are alone responsible for the present poverty of the masses and want to exonerate themselves from their share of the responsibility. It is quite easy for any class to shift its own burden

on to the shoulders of others, but honesty requires that every class must frankly avow the real position and must accept its own responsibility. I want to assure every Muslim friend belonging to the Muslim League Party that we are as solicitous about the protection and safeguarding of the rights of minorities as they can possibly be. I believe that it is the duty of the majority community to win the confidence of the minorities. I believe, Sir, that it is not enough for a majority to think that it is doing justice to the minorities but it is its duty to see that the minorities are convinced that justice is being done to them. I will go a step further and say that the duty of the majority community is to be generous to the minorities. Let me assure you that we the members of the National Congress do not recognise any differences of caste, creed and colour. These distinctions are absolutely meaningless to us. We recognise the rights of the minorities and think it our duty to safeguard their interests. But to lay down the law today for those coming in future is a bad policy and is unnecessary and only shows their uneasiness about the matter. Can you tie the hands of the future Muslims? I want my friends to note that there is a ferment in the world of Islam today. The Islamic countries are building their house on the basis of race and nationalism. The whole world of Islam has been powerfully influenced by the ideas of the West and the old medieval institutions are being replaced everywhere by modern institutions. My friends opposite, I am sure, intensely dislike such a state of affairs, but is there any guarantee that the Indian Muslims will never come to believe in the necessity of altering their mode of life? The future generations of Indian Mussalmans may very well come in line with the advanced thought of the world of Islam and demand a uniform code of law for the whole country. Will they prevent the future representatives of the various religious communities whether they be Hindus or Muslims from voicing the feelings of the people and putting them into effect? But if the Mussalmans would wish otherwise and prefer formal law their wishes would certainly be respected. Therefore I would

ask my Muslim friends to think twice and even thrice before they insist on moving their amendment.

A member: Will the Constituent Assembly meet after five generations or when? I think it is contemplated that it should meet in the very near future.

Acharya Narendra Deva: In the near future of course, but no one can say when the future will be.

As regards the question of method of representation which is the subject of another part of the amendment that has been moved on behalf of the Muslim League Party, I think it is tabled only in the interest of a small section of that community. It is only the upper classes which are interested in this matter. But even they have begun to think otherwise where their interests seem to demand a change in the method. I may tell you, Sir, it may be a sort of bold prophecy that within a few years you will find that those Muslims who are in a majority in some provinces will come forward and ask for joint electorates and the Hindus of such provinces will come forward to oppose such proposals. Welcome signs are not wanting even today. If you take the case of Punjab, what is the Muslim Premier of that Province doing? He is very much in favour of having a system of joint representation and he is putting forth his efforts in that direction. Therefore I say with great respect that this part of the amendment has been moved not in the interests of the Muslim masses but in the interests of the Muslim upper classes who are dominating the whole group today. I will not take more time of the House as I am afraid I have already transgressed the limits of indulgence.

The Hon'ble the Speaker: I wish to remind the honourable member that he has already taken thirty minutes.

Acharya Narendra Deva: The real reason why the Opposition is afraid of complete independence is that they know that either the State must dominate property or the property must dominate the State. We find that at present property is dominating the state. They regard property as a sacred institution which cannot be modified in any manner. That is why they are anxious that India's con-

nexion with British Imperialism must not cease and must be retained at any cost. While the Muslims of the upper classes are of this view, the Muslim masses are steeped in debt, poverty and degradation and we want to extricate them from this deplorable condition. The solution of the problem lies in winning the freedom for the broad issues and that is possible only if the State takes over general control of the means of production in the interest of the whole community. The institution of property is not sacred in our eyes and if the Muslim masses are to live a decent life, suitable modifications will have to be made in the institution of property and for having a free hand in the matter, complete independence is an absolute necessity. With this few words, Sir, I commend the resolution for the acceptance of the House.

3

Lessons of the Crisis (1938)

NEITHER the recent constitutional crisis nor its fading out was undesirable from our viewpoint. If anything, they strengthen our contentions.

We have maintained from the beginning that if the Congress desired to use the constitution in a revolutionary way to increase its strength and if it spurns to settle down to work *a la* reformist organisations, such clashes and crises become inevitable. And we have always emphasised that the success of our proposition to such a situation would depend on the consciousness we have roused among the people and the organisational strength we have mobilised.

This crisis must be an eye-opener to those who were envisaging a long period of parliamentary activities. We have now ample evidence to show that the British Government desire to permit not the Congress Ministries to function unreservedly.

The British Government have realised that their difficulties are not eased by an "understanding" with the Congress. The opposition to the imperialist federation remains as unbending as ever. They had to postpone repeatedly the much heralded visit of the British King of India. In the country the influence of the Congress Left is daily growing. The Government are not anxious, therefore, to keep the Congress in office.

The international situation, for the capitalist ruling class of Great Britain, is not as tense as before, the Mediterranean danger is relaxing with the overtures to Italy. The constitutional crisis in India, in this context, was not therefore particularly disturbing for the British Government.

But the issue on which the crisis was provoked was unlikely to safeguard its position, and imperialism had there-

fore to bend in the end. The other political parties were one with the Congress on the issue involved. Even the *taluqdars* could not muster enough courage to form *interim* ministry. They knew that it would be impossible for them to collect rents and that they would in all probability, be faced with a serious situation.

The world opinion, on the question, was with the Congress. There was no occasion to resort to article 126 (5) of the Government of India Act (1935) as the Viceroy had done. There was not the least danger of the peace and tranquillity of the country being seriously jeopardised by the release of the political prisoners.

The Government had, in the end, to climb down and accept the demand of the Congress. But this peaceful fading out of the crisis does not mean that the Government-Congress relations will henceforth be harmonious. On the contrary it shows that the Government are on the look out for a more opportune issue and the crisis that will be created on it will be more serious and extensive. The new constitution inheres crisis. Our attitude to the new constitution and the existing relationship between British and India make such a clash inevitable.

But such constitutional crisis can be adequately utilised only when the parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary activities of the Congress are used to rouse the political consciousness of the people. In other words, the masses have to be organised on the basis of their economic demands and their revolutionary mentality developed to a pitch where they are ready to wage the final battle with imperialism.

The Congress Ministers must take the lesson of this crisis and direct their work in the above-suggested direction. The Government must not be allowed to catch us unprepared, to thrust a struggle on us when we are not in a position to face it. The legislative programme of the Congress must therefore be urgently pushed through.

The awakening in the country that the leftists have brought about has played a significant part in resolving the recent crisis. At the critical time the Left lined up with

the Congress leadership and gave a magnificent demonstration of unity—a demonstration that disconcerted the imperialists.

It is unfortunate that certain sections of the Congress should continue to misunderstand the activities of left-wingers. The Congress leadership today does not put the same value on mass struggles as the leftists do. But it should realise that but for the strength of the mass-consciousness behind the Congress this crisis would not have ended so easily. The Congress will fail to face adequately the coming conflicts and crises if attention is not rivetted on strengthening the masses. The wisdom and sagacity of the leadership lie in rallying all anti-imperialist forces together in furthering the organised strength of the people.*

* The refusal of the Governors of the U .P. and Bihar to permit the respective Congress Ministries to release all political prisoners created a political crisis. Pandit Gobind Ballabh Pant, the Premier of U. P. and Babu Shri Krishna Sinha, the Premier of Bihar, thereupon handed over the resignations of their respective ministries. This was on the eve of the Haripura Session of the Congress in February, 1938. Acharya Narendra Deva's article which appeared in the *Congress Socialist Weekly* of 5-3-1938 was written on this occasion—*Editor.*

4

To the States People (1939)

[Acharya Narendra Deva presided over the Central Indian States Peoples' Conference on 14th and 15th of May 1939, at Dohad in the Panchmahal District of Gujarat. Shri Kamalshankar Pandya was the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

Delegates from Gwalior, Indore, Ratlam, Ujjain, Rajgarh, Orchha, Bhopal, Barnagar, and other States of Central India were present, representing the different Praja Mandals.

Thousands attended the conference, *jathas* of Kisans marching long distances and in their bullock-carts carrying placards and posters. Acharya Narendra Deva's presidential speech from which extracts are given here, was delivered extempore, lasted for 160 minutes.—Editor.]

I THANK you all for giving me an opportunity to serve the Central Indian States people about a crore and a half in number, far backward from the rest of India. I have come across numerous instances of tyranny and denial of civic rights and civil liberties in these States. The States people's problem has reached a stage when the British Indian people cannot proceed further in their struggle for independence without the people of these States. The States have resorted to firing and violence. Delegates of this Conference have been arrested, Indore has devised an order resulting in the prevention of Mr. Subhas Bose going to Indore. The Princes are the allies of British Imperialism. Artificial barriers cannot be permanent. The struggle for independence is universal and

politically India is one and indivisible. The Congress policy towards the States is steadily evolving and the Tripuri Resolution is a clear advance for Congressmen participating in States people's struggles. The States' people may legitimately expect the Congress Working Committee to have States' Sub-Committee. The Congress flag is also the flag of the States' people and it is a symbol of their liberation from British rule and a feudal autocracy. I am glad that you have adopted it. The alignment of States' people on the side of the Congress struggle is proof of the power of the Congress. But the Congress in Government is meeting with obvious obstacles and baffling problems which make it a target of criticism and attack from friends and opponents as well. The deficiencies of Congress in action are due to the lack of real and complete power and the people's energies, therefore, must be concentrated on fighting Imperialism and wrecking the slave constitution: freeing the States' people in some six hundred States and capturing complete power.

The States' people must refuse supply of man-power and resources in the coming war. The British Government will compel the Princes to supply them, for its war purposes. The States' people must organise themselves and must have their own propaganda machinery with newspapers and journals and Congressmen should help them in their fight against autocracy. The Ludhiana Resolution of amalgamation of small States with British Provinces is very important and all States' peoples must support this and join in the fight against Federation. We must demand the abolition of the Zamindari system and the Princely Order.

* * *

New recruits have joined the Congress hoping that it would be a bulwark against Socialism. Gandhism has become a cloak for vested interests and selfish groups who have nothing in common with the Congress ideology of mass struggle. These persons are attempting to convert

Congress activity into support of reaction and that is why we see groups and blocs rising within the Congress. But all these groups must present a united front in the fight against the British Government just as has happened in China against Japanese aggression. Our ideal must be a form of Society without exploitation, unemployment and starvation. The dream is a classless society. This conference must fight for the oppressed and for a system of State, where there would not be any class domination and exploitation.

5

The Congress Constitution (1939)

[With the increasing power of the Congress the scramble to attain positions of power in it has naturally increased. Groups within it have become more active and power-politics in the organisation has been exerting its pull. To safeguard the organisation against corruption and bogus membership the session of the Indian National Congress at Tripuri authorised the A.I.C.C. "to take all steps that may be necessary to attain that end (to remove the abuses in the enrolment of members, elections, etc.) including the Constitution."

The committee appointed for the purpose consisted of the President and the General Secretary, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Narendra Deva and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

The committee met in Bombay from June 3 to 7, 1939 and completed its labours. It suggested far-reaching amendments and additions to the Congress Constitution, some of which even went further than the objects for which it was appointed. The effect of some of these recommendations, it was feared, would result in driving political minorities out of the Congress. Among other things these changes sought to give power to the Congress Working Committee to exclude from the Congress, members of communal or *any other* organisation. They also proposed to abolish substantially the system of election to the A.I.C.C. on the principle of proportional representation and single transferable vote by suggesting that 2/3 of the number of seats should be elected on the territorial basis by a single distributive vote. Acharya Narendra Deva wrote the following Minutes of Dissent.—Editor.]

IT is sought to amend the present Article 5(c) by the insertion of the words *or any other* between the words "communal" and "organisation". The amendment seems apparently unexceptionable but in my opinion, no case has been made out for the introduction of these words. The clause as amended is further liable to be misused as it places large powers in the hands of the Working Committee for banning class organisations or political groups and parties within the Congress. Such a demand has already been made in certain quarters and it would appear as if the proposed change is being recommended to satisfy that demand. The Congress has no doubt the right to ban organisations which are anti-national and whose political objctives and policies are in conflict with those of the Congress, and such a right can be exercised whenever a clear case has been established.

It is also open to Provincial Congress Committees to take disciplinary action against such individual members of the Congress as indulge in activities which are opposed to the Congress objectives and policies. But certainly it would be highly improper to prevent Congressmen from participating in class organisations whose political objectives is the same as that of the Congress but whose economic programme may not for the moment be identical with that of the Congress.

In my humble judgment if ever any action is taken against such class organisations under the amended clause it would lead to disastrous results. It would not only lead to discord and disharmony in the Congress ranks but will alienate other anti-Imperialist organisations from the Congress.

The second point on which I differ from my colleagues, relates to the proposed change in Article 7(b). The present system of election to the A.I.C.C. on the principle of single transferable vote is proposed to be substantially abolished. Under the new arrangement only 1/3 of the seats will be filled by the present method of election.

Right of election to the A.I.C.C. by proportional representation by single transferable vote has been exercised by

political minorities since the year 1935 and it is generally cherished by them specially at the present moment when party feelings run high and an atmosphere of mutual suspicion prevails in the Congress. The withdrawal of such a right at the present moment is inopportune. It is liable to be interpreted as an attempt to drive out minorities from the A.I.C.C.

Various political groups within the Congress should have the fullest opportunity to influence and mould the policy of the Congress and as the A.I.C.C. also functions as the Committee for the Open Session, political groups which are in a minority to-day will certainly not be in a position to influence the decisions of the Congress when the new rule is put into operation. The fact that one-third of the seats will continue to be filled by the present method of election does not substantially alter the position.

The communal minorities also take advantage of the present provision and get some representation on the A.I.C.C. but after discontinuance of the present system in a large measure, it would not be possible for them also to secure any representation worth the name on the A.I.C.C.

It has been pointed out that the present system of election to the A.I.C.C. suffers from some defects which have to be remedied. In my opinion it should not be difficult to remedy these defects while substantially retaining the system.

Again it has been nobody's case that the present system of election to the A.I.C.C. has led to corruption in the Congress.

V

PROBLEMS OF SOCIALIST UNITY (1938)

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THE Socialists desire to build up a powerful anti-imperialist front to achieve independence of the country and to establish a democratic regime wherein the economic life of the people would be organised on socialist lines. The realisation of these objectives demands unity in socialist ranks. Such unity becomes all the more imperative at this juncture when the national movement is taking a new turn, when the oppressed and exploited masses have to prepare for a great offensive and when a section of the Congress leadership is attacking the Left-wing with a view to suppress it. It is not possible to postpone it any further.

The C. S. P. has from its inception strived for unity of all socialists. But, in the past, the attitude of our Communist friends towards the Party and its efforts for unity was not merely one of indifference but of open hostility. They tried to discredit the Party by denouncing it, among other things, as a social-fascist party. Unwilling to accentuate the differences among the socialists we refrained from answering back this campaign of calumny and vilification. Despite our forebearance, the Communists, with characteristic obstinacy, persisted in their antagonism and the C.S.P. could not succeed in uniting all the socialists.

* * * *

It is necessary to recollect why a socialist party, distinct from the Communist Party, was formed and why it has been called the CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY. Congress Socialism, in reality, is the Indian transliteration of the Russian "Social Democracy". As Lenin pointed out "Social Democracy" expresses the interdependence of two revolutions—one social, that is, of economic emancipation and the other political, that is, of democratic freedom. Lenin has further pointed out that socialist objective can be realised only through the struggle for democracy. In

colonial countries the national struggle is a democratic struggle.

Our party would have called itself Social Democratic Party but for the fact that the name had acquired a bad connotation thanks to the betrayal of the European Social-Democrats in the First World War and their lining up with their respective national bourgeoisie in the war. Lenin for the same reason preferred to call Social Democratic Parties, on their reorganisation by him, Communist Parties. The C. S. P. had no desire to adopt the discredited name, Social-Democratic Party, and it also had to reject the name Communist Party.

When the socialists working in the Congress came together to form a party, certain opprobrium was attached to the Communist Party for its isolation from the national movement. Not only it kept aloof from the national struggles carried on by the Congress but even sought to prevent workers from joining them. Under the circumstances we were constrained to coin a new name: Congress Socialist Party. The word "Congress" symbolises the struggle for democratic *regime*. But the overwhelming reason for affixing it to the Socialist Party was to disabuse the public mind of the damaging belief that the socialists considered the Congress a capitalists' organisation.

The Party was organised by socialists who had actively participated in the Congress movement. The Party naturally consisted predominantly of Congressmen, and proletarian elements were limited. Such composition presented the danger, of the Party getting over-absorbed in the national movement and neglecting the ultimate objective of capture of power by the toilers, before the Party. The Communist Party had to beware of a grave danger. The isolation from the national movement and exclusive absorption in the working-class movement presented the possibility of the neglect of the immediate task of emancipating the country.

The C. S. P. from its inception, desired, in view of the different origins and the difference in the major fields of activities of the two Parties, to have a close understanding

between the C. S. P. and the C. P. It desired to co-operate with the C.P. in those labour sectors where the latter's influence was considerable, while the C. P. was expected to co-operate with the C.S.P. among peasantry and others where the Congress influence was pre-eminent. I have pleaded for such an understanding from my Patna Address onwards. But our Communist friends were not prepared to concede the Marxist character of our Party. Efforts at unity hence proved futile but they show that the C. S. P. has ceaselessly striven for unity in socialist movement from its inception.

It is obvious that an individual cannot be a member of two political parties at the same time, even if the parties happen to represent two branches of revolutionary socialism. An individual, at a time, can be loyal to only one Party and accept its discipline. Socialist Unity can, therefore, be realised either by dissolving all the existing, except one, socialist parties, and make it the forum of unity, all socialists joining it. The various socialist tendencies, not consistent with revolutionary socialism, should be given adequate representation and opportunities. Full internal democracy and intra-party criticism should be assured. This does not of course mean loddening of discipline. The other alternative is to dissolve both the C.S.P. and the C.P. and organise a new Marxist party on the bases suggested above.

If neither of the alternatives is acceptable to the Communists, the two parties must remain as distinct and independent bodies but with a fighting alliance between them. An *ad hoc* co-ordination committee for the purpose, having representatives of both the parties, would then have to be set up. While retaining the ideological differences it is possible for socialists of varying tendencies to work together on such a basis.

But the Communists it seems are not yet prepared for such co-operation. While on one hand they are clamouring for the admission of Communists to the C. S. P., on the other we find them actively trying to oust the socialists

from the leadership of the workers' organisations that they have built up with tremendous efforts and wherein they gave the Communists opportunities to work. These activities of the Communists suggest that they cannot tolerate the influence of any party, except theirs, in the working-class movement. If they desire to co-operate with the socialists on every front, the expression of such a desire should be to cry halt to activities that seek to weaken the influence of the socialists among the workers. If they fail to do this, the Congress Socialists must conclude that the Communists desire to enter the Party, not to realise socialist unity, but to increase their influence in the Congress and Kisan movements. Already such suspicions are widespread among the Socialists and the Communists are responsible for them. The index of the desire of the Communists for unity is to be found to-day in the working-class movement.

The Communists must not raise, in and out of season, the demand for their inclusion in our party. No man can be loyal to two political parties at the same time. It is sometimes suggested that in a political party every allied tendency should find representation, and as a corollary the demand of the inclusion of the Communists into the C. S. P. is put forward. We do not desire artificial ideological unity in the Party. No party can grow on suppression of varying tendencies and the creation of mechanical unity. Ideological differences often further the development of a party, but this does not mean that we throw open our doors to persons who directly or indirectly receive their instructions or draw their inspiration from another party. Those who press for the inclusion of Communists in the C.S.P. forget that the C.S.P. is a political party and not a joint front, a national parliament, embracing various sections and classes like the Congress.

Those who press for the inclusion of Communists in the C. S. P. either deny or deliberately ignore the fact that the C. S. P. is a political party. They desire to convert it into the platform of Left unity. It is time it is realised

that the C.S.P. is a political party with its distinct ideology, programme of work, approach and discipline.

In place of platform of Left unity it is sometimes suggested that the C.S.P. is the party of socialist unity. The change of words obviously do not, cannot, bring about any change of intentions. A Party of socialist unity is a contradiction in terms. The C. S. P. can be a party that strives for socialist unity, both the C.S.P. and C.P. can be the parties desiring unity but to suggest that one party is of socialist unity and the other is not is absurd patently.

Those who desire the C. S. P. to be the party of socialist unity also demand the broadening of the Party to include all active anti-imperialists. The intention is clear—to transform the C. S. P. into a broad platform of Left unity wherein the Communists would get ample opportunities to increase their influence. It must be the policy of every Socialist, as it has always been of our Party, to depute party members in every assembly of anti-imperialist masses. But it is scarcely honest to raise this into a principle on which the Socialist Party is to be based and to damn it as anti-unity when it refuses to be a party to such dilution and loosening.

It has been suggested that the number of class-conscious proletariats in our ranks should be increased and further that the Party should be increasingly proletariatised. The process cannot be mechanically hastened, it must be of natural growth. As deeper go the roots of the Socialist Party into the working class movement and as the movement itself assumes higher forms, the proletarian elements will expand. Proletarianisation does not mean flooding the Party with the members of Ekka-Tonga Union, Coolie Union, Bhangi Union, etc., such indiscriminate admission will destroy the character of the Party—it will no longer be a party of steeled revolutionaries offering the leadership of our national struggle. Needless to say that the Party must ever try to get into its ranks an increasing number of conscious workers.

It is worth enquiring whether, after twenty years of existence, the Communist Party has succeeded in ridding itself of the predominance of intellectuals. Has it at last realised a proletarian majority? It is hardly a matter of shame to have failed to realise a transformation in four years that the Communist Party has not yet achieved even after twenty years of existence.

The emphasis of the Communists on "unity" only results in weakening the growing united-front mentality in the country. Their arguments intensify the miasma of suspicion that affects even those who desire to preserve united front in some form or another.*

Congress Socialist Weekly, 9th April, 1938.

VI

THE INDIAN STRUGGLE (1940)

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THE march of events in the world and India is unfolding the prospect of an early struggle for independence in our country. Step by step, our national leadership is being forced to prepare for a final combat with British Imperialism. In such a situation what should radical forces in India do? What is that line that will stiffen the national leadership and force imperialism to abdicate? Attacking the national leadership for its past and present incapacity and risking a disorganisation of the struggle or backing it in the attempt to move the entire Congress onward towards struggle? Would not the increasing preparedness for a successful struggle steel and stiffen our leadership?

Let us examine the policy and programme of the radical forces in our country in the light of these questions.

Amongst the leftists in our country there are four distinct groups. Their attitude on the question of an immediate struggle for Indian independence is not identical. On this important question there is a sharp division of opinion.

ROY'S POSITION

Comrade M. N. Roy thinks that it would be inadvisable to embark upon the struggle without adequate and effective preparation. It is argued that the present leadership is incapable of waging a relentless struggle. Compromise is the essence of Gandhism and any struggle conducted according to the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha will not yield fruitful results. It can only end in a compromise. The Gandhian technique is defective and incomplete and we cannot reach our objective of complete independence by adhering to that technique. Congress committees are not properly organised and sufficiently politically developed to become effective organs of our anti-imperialistic

struggle. We should, therefore, not bother about an immediate struggle but engage ourselves in activities calculated to transform the Congress organisation into a fit instrument of revolutionary struggle. Adequate preparations on a vast scale and for a sufficiently long time will be needed to accomplish this preliminary task. Our task is, therefore, two-fold:

In the first place, we are asked to bend all our energies towards exposing the present leadership and showing up the hollowness of the Gandhian technique. Congressmen are called upon to strive for alternative leadership. Unless the present leadership is dethroned, the main task before the nation will remain unachieved.

Secondly, we are recommended a technique of struggle and a scheme of activity which, if carried out, will prepare the country for the coming struggle. The technique, however, is not the special property of Comrade Roy. It is the common property of all socialists.

In the present circumstances, Comrade Roy's programme cannot be officially adopted by the Congress and as such the responsibility for introducing the new technique devolves on such elements in the left as agree with it. Comrade Roy wishes to create conditions that will facilitate this task. This is why he was opposed to the withdrawal of Congress Ministries from provincial administrations. He felt that the suspension of the constitution would lead to the curtailment of civil liberties.

For this very reason, he urged the President of the Congress in a letter in September to offer help to the Allies against Nazi Germany, if the British Government agreed to amend the constitution so as to secure larger powers for provincial governments, adult franchise and full rights of citizenship for the people of the States.

COMMUNIST STAND

While Comrade Roy, like the Congress Socialists, regards the Congress as a revolutionary democratic movement and, therefore, considers Congress Committees to be organs of our struggle for national independence, the Communists

characterise the Congress as a mass organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie. According to them its leadership, both organisational and ideological has always been bourgeois in character and its programme and policies have served bourgeois interests. This is why in their opinion Gandhism is the right wing and 'left' reformism the left wing of the bourgeois ideology. This is why at one time they called the C.S.P. a 'left manoeuvre bearing the socialist label'. With this conception of the Congress, they naturally tried to form an independent platform, supported by an independent organisation, embodying the united anti-Imperialist front. This independent organisation must come out in opposition to the Congress. It must consistently criticise the national reformist bodies and organisations, and expose their true role before the masses. The communists must try to isolate the leadership and the 'national reformist organisation, (meaning the Congress) from the toiling masses. Kisan Sabhas must be formed to fight Congress influence among Kisans. The tactics of united front was described as the most effective method of mobilising the masses for the economic and political struggle and **for freeing the masses from the influence of the National Congress and its agencies'** (Black mine). Congress must be joined because it provided legal possibilities to an illegal organisation for weaning away honest revolutionary elements in the Congress from bourgeois leadership and for building up a fighting front.

It is certainly true that the Seventh World Congress gave a new tactical orientation to the Communist International and decided to apply the united front tactics in a new way. It was because of this change that Comrades Dutt and Bradley of the British Communist Party in January 1936, wrote their famous thesis known, as the "Anti-Imperialist Peoples' Front In India", in which they advocate the application of united front tactics in quite a new form and called upon the Indian Communists "to build the broadest possible front of all the imperialist forces in the country **on the basis of the Indian National Congress** and support and strengthen it to this end." (Black mine).

This was of course a healthy attitude and the thesis was endorsed by the Indian Communist Party in 1937. Since then the Indian Communists are talking of the unity in the Congress. But in the period of war and revolutionary crisis their policy has changed again, and they seem to have gone back to their old position. The leadership is being attacked and efforts are made to 'expose and isolate it.' "Not the policy of inducing and pushing the policy of Gandhian leadership into struggle but of isolating that leadership and smashing its mass influence." Public exposure of that leadership is said to be the immediate task before the Communists for building the fighting front of the people. This is called 'united front from below', i.e., unity with the rank and file as against the leaders. But it should be plain to the meanest understanding that it is impossible to call the Congress minded masses to a common struggle without the co-operation of those to whom they give their confidence and look up for guidance.

In short, they aspire today to acquire influence over the masses in the fold of the Congress by attacking the present leadership and trying to undermine its influence. They seem to stand for an immediate struggle but, in effect, they produce disorganisation in the forces of the struggle. Because they do not believe that the present leadership is or can be at least objectively revolutionary, they are attempting to create new organs of struggle outside the Congress and very often in rivalry with it. But so far they have not met with any success and, therefore, the confusion that they have created is also limited in its scope.

They cannot go on claiming that they stand for an immediate struggle, while they believe in such policies and pursue such tactics, for the simple reason that very few Congressmen and their followers will agree to accept them as comrades in the struggle. Their main difference with Comrade Roy and his followers consists in their approach towards the Congress and the question of the leadership of the national movement. Comrade Roy and his followers believe in developing the Congress into the organ of our anti-imperialist struggle and do not advocate the leader-

ship of the working class at this stage, while Communists do not believe in the former and vigorously stand for the latter.

BOSE'S ATTITUDE

It is difficult to grasp the theory that underlies the activities of Shree Subhas Chandra Bose. He talks of an immediate struggle and does all that lies in his power to make it difficult. He goes about attacking the present leadership of the Congress, declaring that it does not want a struggle, and accuses it of consciously working for a compromise.*

If one were to believe him, the greater obstacle today is the present leadership of the Congress and not British Imperialism. He openly talks of two Congresses and of fighting this leadership with a new swarajist programme. The methods he is pursuing will not stop compromise but create conditions favourable to it. By making the starting of the struggle difficult, he is helping to create conditions that will embolden our enemies and strengthen the hands of the elements that are hankering for compromise in the Congress.

THE CORRECT APPROACH

It is this question of approach to the Congress and the coming struggle that constitutes the main difference between the various groups among the left. Congress Socialists believe and Comrade Roy and his followers agree with us there, that ultimately by a process of transformation the Congress can become a fit instrument for the achievement of our objective. This does not mean that we completely exclude the possibility of the Congress going astray. If this happens the Congress will have exhausted

* This refers to statements made during his second Congress Presidential election campaign in which Subhas Babu charged Congress leaders with carrying on negotiations in secret with the British Government, for compromise,—charges which he subsequently modified.

its possibilities and new organs of struggle will have to be created for carrying on the fight.

But we have very good reasons for believing that if we continue to work on correct lines, we will be able to keep the Congress on the straight path and develop it for effective action. Communists have never really believed in this. That is why they can be neutral today on the question of the Anti-Compromise Conference. It is astounding that the Communists should remain neutral on a question of such vital importance. The pre-eminence and unity of the Congress is not so important to them.

SOCIALIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONGRESS

This difference between us becomes very clear, for instance, when the problem of discipline in the Congress is involved. The Congress Socialists have, irrespective of their opinons, stood by the Congress on such occasions. Our attitude towards the Congress and the struggle explains our position in regard to the Anti-Compromise Conference and to every other move that tends to weaken or split the Congress. We believe that there are rich possibilities in the Congress. The Congress today wields enormous influence both at home and abroad and though we may differ from its official policies and acts, it would be the height of folly to think of breaking it up.

The Congress symbolises Indian unity and democracy. It is the only solid anchor, of our hopes and aspirations in an otherwise troubled state of affairs. Fascist tendencies have begun to raise their heads and dangerous doctrines of national disunity and disintegration are being preached all round. Communalism is on the upward grade. Reactionary forces are trying to form a powerful combination in alliance with British Imperialism to crush the forces of progress and freedom. They are making the Congress and the national leadership their target. It is foolish to imagine that they are only opposed to the present High Command and would gladly join the Congress under a new dispensation. These factors impose a special obligation on us to see that nothing is done that may tend to weaken or

disintegrate the Congress. A high sense of loyalty is demanded of us at the present juncture.

THE DYNAMICS OF STRUGGLE

It is easy to understand the great emphasis Roy lays on change of leadership. But he seems, somehow to disregard the fact that struggle is a very effective instrument for changing the leadership. The pressure for struggle releases forces that move and metamorphose the leadership. New leadership is created in the course of the struggle. A mass struggle always throws up new leaders of the masses. It is only by showing qualities of leadership, by leading the masses from victory to victory, that one can win their confidence and achieve a place in the national leadership. Golden opportunities for growth are provided by a struggle.

The new technique of struggle can also be tried in however limited a field. And if it proves effective and compares favourably with the old technique and impresses people, it becomes a powerful instrument for changing the leadership. Past experience tells us that the process of radicalisation of the Congress is speeded up whenever the Congress launches a mass struggle. The rank and file is provided with rich experiences in course of the struggle. It sees the technique in operation and realises its inadequacy and partial ineffectiveness. In a dynamic situation this process is accelerated. Whatever the technique of struggle, the experiences and results of a struggle are always healthy and beneficial to the movement.

In this belief and on the basis of these experiences, Congress Socialists have urged the Congress throughout to prepare for a struggle. The people want a struggle. In the context of war such a desire has become overpowering and irresistible. The policy of war-resistance reiterated at every Congress, beginning with the Lucknow session, has created this urge among the people. The entire left shares the responsibility jointly for taking these repeated decisions. And when the moment has come for implementing these decisions, it would be wrong for us to change the

front and advise postponement of the struggle until the conclusion of the war.

The reasons assigned by Comrade Roy for this change of policy existed at the time the decisions were taken. We cannot say that we had no certain knowledge of the conditions that persist today. Nobody could have hoped for a radical change in the leadership of the Congress in such a short time. It is bad leadership to bring the issue of war-resistance to the foreground and to become indifferent to the demand for struggle which follows from it.

Besides, in our view in the existing circumstances a settlement between the British Government and the Congress is not easy. The Congress, even as it is today cannot be satisfied with another instalment of reforms and a promise of conferment of Dominion Status at an unspecified date. Nor is the British Government prepared to part with power to any substantial extent. Thus a compromise seems difficult today. Repression is going on in right earnest. As things are, no ultimate escape from the struggle seems possible.

Even on the assumptions of Comrade Roy we ought to be prepared for struggle. Comrade Roy had urged the President of the Congress to enter into negotiations with the British Government on certain terms. Let us suppose his advice had been followed and the demands as formulated by him had been presented to the British Government, and further suppose that these demands had been rejected, what should the Congress have done in those circumstances? A struggle would have become inevitable.

It is strange that Comrade Roy should have failed to provide for this contingency. It may be said in reply that the terms suggested were so reasonable and moderate that the British Government could not have rejected them. But it is folly to rely on the sweet reasonableness of one's opponents. There is such a thing as the enemy forcing a fight on us. Wise leadership would, therefore, prepare for a fight while it negotiates with the enemy. The only sound policy, therefore, is to prepare the country for a struggle and to move the whole Congress onward to a struggle.

A very necessary part of this policy is to create a suitable atmosphere for it. Internal conflict and controversy should be ended and appeals for unity and discipline in our ranks should resound in the country. This is the path of success. Any other course would be detrimental to the cause we hold dear. The alternative is disunity, demoralisation and defeat.

SOCIALISTS FOR MOVING ENTIRE CONGRESS

Let Congressmen, at least, close their ranks and present a solid phalanx to the enemy, to enable a united nation to meet this challenge to our manhood. Repression is in full swing. If we do not begin the struggle, it will be forced on us. At such a critical moment in the history of the Congress let there be no divided counsels. We must speak with one voice and prepare to fight shoulder to shoulder.

If we wish to move the entire Congress towards a struggle, we cannot carry on a crusade against its leaders, suggesting that they want to avoid a struggle at all costs and accusing them of wanting to compromise with British Imperialism in disregard of the principles of the Congress. This is just the way to sabotage a struggle. When the country is asked not to trust even the explicit declarations of the Working Committee, we cannot expect people to take the necessary preparations for struggle seriously. Nothing on the part of the members of the Working Committee entitles us to insinuate that they are men of dishonour. Such a propaganda defeats its own purpose.

TWO VOICES

This is our grievance against Shree Subhas Chandra Bose. We had trusted that he would not try to break the integrity of the Congress. The passionate appeal for unity that he made at the outbreak of the war is still ringing in our ears. He opposed in the past the present leadership but worked against the Congress itself. A great change has come over him since. He seems to be bent upon splitting the Congress now.

He wants the present Congress to be converted into a Rightist Congress out and out and asks Leftists to leave the Congress and help him in creating a new Congress of Leftists. He seems to have taken a dangerous turning on the road to independence.*

Shree Subhas Chandra Bose has not always stood out against compromise like this. During his presidentship he was for negotiations with the British Government over the issue of the war. Today, he asserts that the Constituent Assembly can only be convened after the conquest of power.

But he conveniently forgets what he wrote in his organ, the *Forward Bloc*, on September 9, under the caption "Lead From Wardha." He says there that the "Congress must press the national demand on the Government and insist on its immediate fulfilment." In the same article he proceeds to observe: "Let not our leaders who are now deliberating at Wardha ask for a whit less than what is our inherent birthright. If they are called on to negotiate, let them do so honourably."

A year back at the Malda Divisional Conference and the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Jalpaiguri, Subhas Babu framed a resolution which foreshadowed the possibility of the Government conceding the demand of the Congress, in which event a Constituent Assembly was to be convoked for framing a constitution to be embodied in a treaty of alliance between India and Great Britain This, according to him, could happen very well without recourse to a struggle. How can he now condemn Gandhiji for meeting the Viceroy or negotiating with him?

It is said, however, that such things appeal to the average Leftist. He has been fed upon slogans and his political education has been neglected. He is politically immature. He acts, therefore, as an unwise ally. Proper schooling of political workers and young men is the greatest need.

Insidious propaganda of a false and vicious kind is being carried on particularly against Congress Socialists. We

* This was written *vis-a-vis* the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference held at Ramgarh in March, 1940 at the same time as the Indian National Congress and as a rival to it and over which Babu Subhas Bose presided.

have been described as Mensheviks. We are said to have surrendered to Gandhiji and the High Command. Our appeal to the people to join the struggle under the leadership of Gandhiji has been deliberately misinterpreted to mean abject surrender to Gandhism.

Well, we shall not defend ourselves. Our actions, past and present, will defend us. The line we have adopted does not mean that we have accepted the Gandhian philosophy of life or that we have come to regard the Gandhian technique as adequate or effective. We have again and again pointed out the inadequacy and partial ineffectiveness of the Gandhian technique of struggle and have put forward programmes to supplement it. It is a hard fact that today no struggle will have a nation-wide character and attract the attention of the world unless Gandhiji associates himself with it. This may provide a sad commentary on the state of our political advancement, nevertheless we cannot afford to ignore it. Today, we want a powerful mass movement and unless Gandhiji gives the call, the masses and the classes will not be drawn into it in large numbers. So it is no use asking the Congress to start the struggle ignoring Gandhiji or threaten to start an independent struggle on behalf of a section, if the Congress delays the call.

Our task is to move the entire Congress. This can be achieved only if we work for unity in the Congress, accept its democratic decisions and observe its discipline. We should keep our heads cool and make the best of the situation. Above all, we must not succumb to the temptation of cheap popularity.

Revolutionary courage demands the capacity to withstand popular clamour now and then. Disruptive activities, from whatever quarter they may come, must be vigorously combated even at the risk of unpopularity. True leadership and opportunism go ill together. National unity must be our watchword. And our decisions and activities must be characterised by sobriety, a scrupulous regard for truth and a supreme desire to serve the best interests of the country.

VII

THE WAR-IMPERIALIST OR PEOPLE'S?
(1942)

THE WAR-IMPERIALIST OR PEOPLE'S? (1942)

THE party has always condemned wars between peoples as barbarous. But its attitude towards war differs in principle from that of pacifists and believers in absolute non-violence. The Party's opposition to war is based fundamentally on political grounds. We realise that wars are inevitable in a society based on exploitation and therefore we recognise the impossibility of eliminating wars without eliminating the root causes of rivalries and conflicts and without establishing Socialism. We further recognise the justice and progressive character of certain wars, i.e., wars of national liberation conducted by an oppressed people against their oppressors, of serfs against landowners, of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. In such wars Socialists will always sympathise with the oppressed people struggling to cast off the foreign yoke and the proletariat struggling to overthrow the capitalist rule of the bourgeoisie. In the epoch when capitalism was still progressive and was destroying feudalism and absolutism, Socialists could very well sympathise with that bourgeoisie which helped in the accomplishment of this task notwithstanding the fact that they also conquered foreign lands. The fundamental historic significance of such wars did not alter by these acts of injustice and pillage on the part of the bourgeoisie. Such an epoch was opened by the French Revolution and the period between 1789 and 1871 (Paris Commune) was characterised by many wars which bore such a progressive character. These were national wars waged against foreign domination and the general tendency of the wars of this period was to weaken and destroy absolutism and feudalism. This historic task was performed by the bourgeoisie which opened the perspect-

ive for the development of a proletarian struggle for socialism.

But we are living today in an imperialist epoch. Capitalism has exhausted its progressive character and has become a reactionary force. It has become a fetter on the forces of production. Imperialism is the highest stage in the development of capitalism. Free trade and competition have been superseded by the tendencies of monopoly. The productive forces have been developed to such an extent that they can no longer be held within the capitalist framework. Humanity must either pass over to Socialism or witness recurrent wars among capitalist nations for the preservation of capitalist economy and the bourgeois rule.

Such an epoch was reached in the 20th century. The war of 1914-18 was an imperialist war waged to serve imperialist ends. War is "politics continued by other (i.e., forcible) means." The world-war of 1914-18 simply continued the imperialist policy of colonial robbery, oppression of foreign nations and suppression of labour movements.

The present war is of the same character. The epoch of imperialism has not ended notwithstanding the fact that there has come into existence as a result of the last war a state which claims to be socialist. The dominant economy of the world continues to be capitalist. When the war broke out in September 1939, its imperialist character was generally recognised. The national units or the Communist Parties took up a straight "anti-war" position. They said in effect, "This is an imperialist war." In an imperialist war "the enemy is in your own country." From the point of view of the working class, there is nothing to choose between rival ruling classes: and therefore, the working class in each country has the sole duty of attacking its own ruling class in order to end the war by the defeat of all ruling classes and by an international socialist revolution. To the argument that British capitalism is less bad than German fascism the *Daily Worker* (the Communist daily in England) of April 26th, 1940, replied as follows:

"In reply to those who said 'fight for the Russian capitalist because otherwise you will fall under the heel of the German capitalist' Lenin said: The alternative is false, choose neither, but unite your forces and establish the power of the people.' That was over twenty-two years ago." In 1940 Communists did not draw any difference between parliamentary democracy and fascism in determining the nature of the war.

Mr. Victor Gollancz, however, advanced the view that the rise of fascism was a new factor which should be taken into account and that the slogans of 1914-18 did not apply to the present war, which was an anti-fascist war. This was also the view of the Communist parties before the signing of the German-Soviet Pact. In an Open Letter which he addressed to the Communists, entitled "Where are you going?" Mr. V. Gollancz pointed out to his erstwhile co-workers:—"nor was there the slightest suggestion, either that we should" give way 'to Hitler if the U.S.S.R. was not by our side? or that we should refuse to fight behind the Tories. On the contrary the cry 'Chamberlain would not stand up to Hitler: and something more than a shy glance was turned, now towards Eden, now towards Winston Churchill, now towards Duff Cooper, precisely in the belief that they WOULD.' Indeed, as time went on, it was to the Tories that our appeal (rather than mine) was more and more directly made."

On the basis of what the Communists used to say in the Popular Front days about the danger of Hitler-Fascism, Victor Gollancz appealed to them to reconsider their new anti-war position and at least to refrain from doing anything which might give a pro-Nazi impression. He specially pointed out to them that all the Communist parties were not consistently following the "anti-war" line that while British and French Communists were telling the British and French people that "the main enemy is at home" the allies, for German Communists "the main enemy is abroad." the Allies. He made a reference in this connection to an article published in *Die Welt* (an official C.P. paper) of Feb. 2nd., 1940 by Walter Ulbricht, a member

of the Central Committee of the German party, in which the following sentence occurs:

"This war policy (namely, support of the Allies) is the more criminal because... (Great Britain)... IS THE MOST REACTIONARY FORCE IN THE WORLD."

Ulbricht does not tell the German Communists that the enemy is at home. There is no appeal to the German people to rise up and overthrow the regime by revolutionary action (and lest, it should be thought that this may be due to difficulties of publication, it must be remembered that DIE WELT is published in Sweden). On the contrary he tells them that Great Britain "is the most reactionary force in the world." The *Daily Worker* (Feb. 1st 1940) also threw all the blame on Britain and gave the impression that Hitler was after all reasonable enough and that all the trouble was due solely to the wickedness of Chamberlain and Reynaud. The following extract from the *Daily Worker* is interesting:

"Hitler repeated once again his claim that the war was thrust upon him by Britain. Against this historical fact there is no reply. Britain declared war, not Germany. Attempts were made to end the war, but the Soviet-German peace overtures were rejected by Britain. All through these months the British and French Governments have had the power to end the War. They have chosen to extend it."

This new trend in the Communist policy and their rank opportunism can be explained only on the basis that Soviet Russia was anxious to keep out of a major war and that it had secured this aim for the moment by the conclusion of the German-Soviet Pact. It was, therefore, necessary for Communists to do nothing which might jeopardise the pact. They could not therefore afford to be consistent in the application of their tactics. It is also certain that if the Pact had not been concluded, the war would have been described as an anti-fascist war, and an appeal would have been issued to the workers of the world to be on the side of the Allies. We shall deal fully with the main shifts in the Communist policy towards the war

at its proper place. Suffice it to say for the present that after the date of the German-Soviet Pact the Communists found themselves free to take an "anti-war" line. Mr. Gollancz, however, pursued the old line of supporting the bourgeois Government as against Hitler and thus saving western Democracy and civilisation from destruction. In support of his plea he appealed to Marx, who, although a German had supported Germany in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-1871). Others quote Marx and Engels, who while denouncing wars, always sided with one or the other of the belligerent Governments, once the war had actually broken out, as was the case in 1854-1855, 1870-1871 and 1876-1877. It is pointed out that Marx persistently egged on the British ruling class to make war on Russia, because he believed that the extension of the power of the Czarist regime would endanger the growth of the working class movements in Europe. It is dangerous to base one's action on analogies of a past epoch. Old formulae lose their validity by change of circumstances. In Marx's time the bourgeoisie had not yet ceased to be progressive. In the last century the qualitative difference between a capitalist state and a feudal autocratic state was very great. Capitalism was performing the historic task of destroying absolutism and feudalism and constituting the national state. Besides, the proletariat had not yet appeared everywhere as an independent political force and wherever it had emerged in view, it had not yet become powerful enough to lead other plebian classes.

All these references were cited in 1914 also by Social-Chauvinists in support of their attitude of defending their fatherland. But as Lenin pointed out at the time they were an abominable distortion of Marx's and Engels' views. Lenin proceeded to reply to them as follows:—

"The war of 1870-1871 was historically progressive on Germany's side up to the defeat of Napoleon III, because both he and the Tsar had long oppressed Germany, keeping it in a state of feudal decentralisation. As soon as the war turned into a plunder of France (annexation of Alsace and Lorraine) Marx and Engels decisively condemned the

Germans. Even at the beginning of the war of 1870-1871 Marx and Engels approved of Bebel's and Liebknecht's refusal to vote for the military appropriations, they advised the Social-Democrats not to merge with the bourgeoisie, but to defend the independent class-interests of the proletariat. To apply the characterisation of the Franco-Prussian War, which was of a bourgeois progressive nature and fought for national liberty, to the present imperialist war is to mock at history. 'The same is even more true about the war of 1854-55 and all other wars of the 19th century, i.e., a TIME WHEN THERE WAS NO MODERN IMPERIALISM, NO RIPE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS FOR SOCIALISM, NO MASS SOCALIST PARTIES IN ALL THE BELLIGERENT COUNTRIES, i.e., when there were none of those conditions from which the Basle Manifesto deduced the tactics of a "proletarian revolution" in the case of a war's arising among the great nations.

Who ever refers at present to Marx's attitude towards the wars of a period when the bourgeoisie was PROGRESSIVE forgetting Marx's and Engels' words that 'the workers have no fatherland," words which refer to A PERIOD WHEN THE BOURGEOISIE IS REACTIONARY AND HAS OUTLIVED ITSELF, TO THE PERIOD OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONS, is shamelessly distorting Marx and substituting a bourgeois for a socialist standpoint." (Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. XVIII, "The Imperialist War," page 22).

The German-Soviet pact had worked well hardly for a year when Hitler decided to extinguish it. The Russian invasion by Hitler brought Soviet Russia on the side of the Allies. The Communist Party of India, however, did not consider this fact to be sufficient to alter the character of the war and continued to support their thesis of active opposition to war. They were of course perturbed at the news and in their naïvete believed for many months that Churchill was instrumental in provoking Hitler to declare war against Russia. But the Communist Party of India is not its own master. It is tied to the chariot wheel of the Third International through the British Communist Party,

which is ruled by the Russian Communists who are guided in their formulation of their policies solely by the requirements of Russia's Foreign policy. It received the mandate from abroad to offer unconditional support to Britain and U.S.A. in their war efforts as Russia's presence on the side of the Allies had changed the character of the war. The war had now become anti-fascist and it was the duty of the working class to support the Allies. The Communist Party quickly obeyed the mandate and has produced a new thesis in which it advocates a policy of unconditional support to Allies on the alleged ground that the war has ceased to be imperialist and has become a people's war. It is sad to reflect that the Communist parties have proved disloyal to their convictions and tasks. The very purpose for which the Third International was brought into being by Lenin has been defeated. The Third International has failed. No one can play hide and seek with history. The crisis engendered by war has torn the mask from off its face and revealed it in its true colours.

We shall examine in detail the new Communist thesis and shall try to explain the historical causes which have led the world Communists to abjure their convictions in a moment of crisis and to betray the cause of revolutionary socialism. However unpleasant the task may be, it has to be performed in a conscientious manner in the interests of truth.

Communists admit that the present is an imperialist epoch. It was only till yesterday that they used to characterise the war as imperialist. According to them it is Russia's entry into the war on the side of the Allies which has altered its character. They now say that it has become an anti-fascist war, a people's war. They have, however, to admit reluctantly that in India it has not become a people's war but then add that it is the duty of the people to make it so and that it lies in their power to change it into a people's war. They pin their hope on dialectics which, they say, will perform the trick.

Every individual war has to be studied separately and with reference to the historic background in which it aris-

es. Marxism does not ask who declares a war but in what complex of circumstances a war takes place. The present war is an outcome of "capitalist imperialism" and "of the policy of conquest" pursued by both the groups of belligerent nations. War is a continuation of policy of politics by other (i.e., forcible) means. As a matter of fact that war started years ago and Sept. 1939 was only a further phase of it. The nature of the war has to be determined with reference to the basic policies and objectives of the principal combatants. The principal combatants in this contest are England and U.S.A. on the one side and Germany, Italy and Japan on the other. They are all imperialists. The first group consists of satiated nations while the other of those which lagged behind in the race for the partition of the world and are accordingly unsatiated. The first group fights for retaining its empire, while the other for enlarging its territories. The present war is being fought for repartitioning the world in accordance with the new relationship of imperialist forces. The mere fact that Russia has become a victim of German aggresion will not change the character of the war. It would be true to say that Russia not being a principal, has no other aim but to defend itself against Nazi aggression. It had therefore to acquiesce in the Atlantic Charter which has only a limited application and which does not rest on principles on the basis of which alone a just and an enduring peace can be secured. Stalin has also made it clear that Russia is fighting a nationalistic war for the defence of the Fatherland. Obviously he does not want to frighten the bourgeoisie of the allied nations and their Governments and for this very reason he has to put aside those ideals which should guide the actions of socialists in settling international relations. The alliance of Russia with England has not changed a bit the war and peace aims of England and still Stalin recommends England and America as defenders and liberators of Asia. The truth of the matter is that each one of the allies is fighting to safeguard his own national interests.

A modern war between the great powers does not signify a conflict between democracy and fascism but a struggle

of two imperialisms for the redivision of the world. "All attempts to represent the present war as a clash between ideas of democracy and fascism belong to the realm of charlatanism or stupidity. Political forms change but capitalist appetites remain." The war continues to be a war against Germany. It has not become a war against fascism as such because imperialist democracy cannot be expected to kill its blood brother which is fascism. The present war does not aim at the destruction of imperialism and therefore cannot lead to the destruction of fascism which is its child. So long as imperialism flourishes fascist reaction will flourish. In times of war these capitalist democracies will tend more and more towards fascism. The exigencies of war will imprint upon them a military outlook and will make them more totalitarian. It is said that since in peace time we repel fascism's encroachment upon democracy, we should be equally prepared to support democracies in their war against fascist governments. But it is forgotten that we defend democracies by means of our own organisations. We do not entrust this defence to the bourgeois State. The imperialist war primarily raises the question of the fate of capitalism before the bourgeoisie of every national state. Similarly the world proletariat must pose the question: capitalism or socialism through international proletarian revolution.

Much stress is laid on the fact that all the fascist states are in one camp. That is hardly an accurate generalisation. The Axis States are the unsatiated nations which are vitally interested in the repartitioning of the world. They could not hope to succeed in their plans if they had not combined with each other. Their enmity is chiefly directed against the great democracies because it is they who are keeping them suppressed. But just as there is a split in the world of imperialism there would be nothing unusual in a split among fascist powers. Who does not know that Italian and German interests are in direct conflict in central Europe and in the Balkans? Who does not also know that they conducted war to the death in Austria throughout 1934 and 1935? The anti-communism of anti-comintern

Powers is a camouflage for aims of aggression. States are guided by self-interest **and not by ideological considerations in arranging political alliances.** Parliamentary democracies are only too glad to welcome fascist or semi-fascist military dictatorship to fight Hitler. And after all was not Poland a semi-fascist state whose integrity was guaranteed by England and France and for whose sake they went to war? And again is not Greece in the camp of democracies —Greece that was ruled by General Mataxas who established a dictatorship in 1936 and became a premier for life in 1938? It is not that the democracies shunned fascist states and treated them as pariahs. On the contrary they wooed and courted them and tried to win them over to their side (as in the case of. Franco-Spain) but Hitler's successes enticed them away.

Again much capital is made of the fact that England is on the side of the Soviet Union and on this ground it is asserted that it is not possible now to describe the war as an imperialist war. This argument has as much merit or demerit as the assertion that because the Soviet Union is on the side of imperialist England in this war, it is impossible to describe it as a proletarian war.

In no sense can the present war be regarded as a people's war. The war in the main continues to be an imperialist war. If there is a war, for national liberation conducted by a subject people against the slave owner or where people rise in revolt against the bourgeoisie and their national government, acting on the slogan "turn the imperialist war into a civil war," there we have the people's war. But where the State is merely backed by large sections of its nationals in its war policies there it cannot be said that the war has become a people's war. The rallying of the masses to the government is one thing and the rallying of a government to the masses is another. According to this view England's war against Germany should be regarded to have been a people's war ever since Churchill became the Prime Minister of England.

We all know how difficult it is even for the well organised proletarian parties to act on the slogan "turn the

imperialist war into a civil war." National Chauvinism is strong in capitalist countries and proletariat is also swept away by its wave at critical times. Workers generally lined up behind the governments during the last war as well as the present.

The governments of today are being supported by vast masses of peoples. It would be wrong to suppose that Hitler is not supported by the German people. The people are being duped by their rulers and have fallen an easy prey to war hysteria. So the mere fact that the people of a particular country are supporting for the moment their governments in its war efforts will not make the war a people's war and as such just and progressive. Japan has been fighting China for the last several years unofficially though the formal declaration of war has been made quite recently. Great Britain and U.S.A. have also been helping China with big war loans and war materials for sometime past without a formal declaration of hostilities against Japan. The situation has not altered in essence by formalising the proceedings. Russia and Japan are still not fighting each other. China's war is the people's war against foreign aggression but its recent formal alliance with England and U.S.A. will not change the character of the war when viewed as a whole. If that had been so the present war should at no stage have been regarded as Imperialist.

A genuine people's war should lead to the destruction of both: Imperialism of Capitalist Democracy and of Fascism. But he will indeed be a bold man who would say that the present war is being fought to destroy imperialism. That would mean that the British and the American Governments are waging war to destroy themselves.

A similar argument was advanced by Social-Democrats at the time of the last war who pointed out that there was a national element in the war as represented by the war of Serbia against Austria. Lenin exposed their sophistry and replied as follows:—"Only in Serbia and among the Serfs do we find a national movement for freedom, a movement of long standing embracing millions of "National Masses"

and of which the Present war of Serbia against Austria is a "Continuation". Were this war isolated, that is not connected with the general European war with the selfish and predatory aims of England, Russia etc., then all socialists would be obliged to wish success to the Serbian bourgeoisie —that is the only correct and absolutely necessary conclusion to be drawn from National Element in the present war. The national element of the Serbo-Austrian war has no significance and can have none, in the general European war."

It may be said that it is our duty to consider everything from the point of view of the interests of the Soviet Union which is just now ranged on the side of the Allies fighting in self-defence against Hitler and that it becomes the duty of the world proletariat to line up behind the allied governments. It would be wrong to view the whole question solely from one point of view, however important that point of view may be. Marxist dialectics teach us to grasp the reality in its entirety and complexity. It is a lying propaganda to say that the present war is being fought by any side for freedom and democracy. The satiated powers want to maintain the *status quo* and preserve their capitalist class interests. Do we not see before our very eyes that civil liberties are being curtailed, that people are being over-burdened with taxation and urged to sacrifice themselves for the bourgeoisie? Is it also not a fact that India, Egypt and the African colonies are still being held in subjection?

It is also said that the New World Order based on justice, freedom and equality will be the direct outcome of the present war. Such a hope is entertained because of the false belief that Russia and China will have the determining voice at the peace conference. This is an illusion which we should get rid of. Peace in the event of an Allied victory will be largely dictated by the U.S.A. this time. It is wrong to say that England and America are virtual prisoners in the hands of Stalin and that they are being made to do his job. As England was the most powerful representative of Capitalism in the past and as such dictated

peace in the last war, so U.S.A. being the most powerful representative of Capitalism in the present epoch, will dictate peace this time. The likelihood is that the U.S.A. will get a free hand in the Pacific, while England will claim a free hand in other spheres. Of course Russia's claim to restoration of her lost territories and to the improvement of the frontiers will be admitted. China's integrity will be restored, subject of course to the retention of Britain's and America's interest in that part of the world. This would be so because these countries have been largely financing China's war efforts in their self-interest. Even if Japanese Imperialism were to go British and American Imperialisms will remain. Russia and China will not be permitted to interfere in the domestic affairs of their allies. Their economic dependence on the U.S.A. in the coming years would not allow them to take a more independent line.

But wars do engender revolutions. It is, however, difficult to predict whether they will take place in the course of the war, or at its end. The probability is that there will be a series of revolutions after the war. The decisions of the war will not be final. They will be revised by mass revolutions. The historical development is reaching a stage when people will take a direct hand in the shaping of things. We have to prepare ourselves for that eventuality. Our work lies in that direction. We should awaken and develop the revolutionary spirit of the masses and prepare them for revolutionary actions.

The question is why the Third International has betrayed its convictions and tasks. There is no doubt that it has demonstrated its hollowness at a crucial moment in history and has failed to serve the purpose for which Great Lenin had created it. It is pertinent to ask why the Third International has met with such a dismal end. For this it is necessary to briefly refer to its historical development. The central fact is that the Third International is subordinate to the national politics of Soviet Russia and that the Soviet bureaucracy under Stalin wanted to keep the Soviet Union out of a major war. All its foreign policies were directed to this end. It is with this view that the 7th

World Congress (1935) decided upon united front tactics to fight war and fascism. The Third International wanted peace at any price. It knew quite well that if there was war in the world the Soviet Union would be drawn into it with immense risk to itself. The proletarian parties of the world had therefore to strive for peace and the maintenancce of the *status quo.* They evidently forgot that interests of the Soviet Union could ultimately be protected only on the world scale by developing international revolutionary action, and not by pinning their faith on alliances with bourgeois States.

It was proper to keep out the war as long as possible but it was fatal to rely on the broken reed of the League of Nations and collective security. The League of Nations was characterised by Stalin as an association of imperialist bandits. Stalin said in 1927 that "The Soviet Union is not prepared to become a part of that camouflage for imperialist machinations represented by the League of Nations. The League is the rendezvous of the imperialist leaders who settle their business behind the scenes." But in 1934 when the Soviet Union itself joined the League the tone changed completely. The communists now began to draw a distinction between "aggressor" and "defender" Nations. This is what Stalin said on 10th March, 1939:—"The war is being waged by **aggressor States** which in every way infringe upon the interest of the **non-aggressive States** primarily in England, France and the U.S.A." Another version of the same distinction is that which they make between the "Peace-loving" imperialists. They called upon the League to punish the aggressor nations and to support the "peace-loving" capitalist nations. To draw such distinctions between two imperialist states in our epoch is a distortion of Marxism. Marxism does not judge the character of a war by answering the question as to who started the war. The truth of the matter is that satiated nations appeared to be peace loving because they do not want the **status quo** to be disturbed. They also distinguish the "Democratic" capitalist state from fascist state and on this ground stated that it was necessary to defend "Democratic" states from

attacks by a fascist country. They also declared that a war fought between democratic-capitalist countries with their ally Soviet Russia, on one side, and Germany on the other would not be an imperialist war.

It is interesting to note that similar arguments were advanced by patriotic social democrats during the last World War who were for defending the fatherland and for supporting the national bourgeoisie. Scheidemann and Noske defended progressive Germany from Czarist barbarism while Guesde and Vaillant defended Republican France from autocratic Germany. They also advanced the argument "We have been attacked; we defend ourselves; the interests of the proletariat demand resistance to the disturber of the European peace". The fallacy of these arguments was mercilessly exposed by Lenin. Lenin said that "This tune is repeated in the declarations of all the governments and in the declamations of all the bourgeois and the yellow press the world over."

The communists accordingly defended bourgeois democracy against fascism and began to establish the people's front, wherever possible, against fascism. If France had stuck to the Franco-Soviet Pact and England had agreed to conclude an alliance with the Soviet Union, Soviet Russia would have been on the side of the allies in this war from the very beginning, and in that case the communist parties of the world would have been instructed to offer unconditional support to the allied governments. When before Munich it was thought that hostilities might soon break out, it began to be asked what would be the attitude of the Indian communists towards the war. It was taken for granted at that time that in the event of a war against Hitler the Soviet Union would be on the side of England and France. It was suggested that in that case Indian communists would have to support the war but our communist friends stoutly refuted the suggestion saying that the fact that Soviet Union was on the side of England and France would not change the Imperialist character of the war. Fortunately for the Indian communists the alliance with England did not materialise, and Stalin successfully

negotiated a non-aggression pact with Hitler who was anxious to avoid a "two fronts" war. The Indian communists were thus saved the necessity of supporting the war and could freely describe it as an imperialist war. They were, besides, to do nothing which would jeopardise the Soviet-German Pact and they had, therefore, to instruct German communists to do nothing which might irritate Hitler and give him a pretext to terminate the Pact. In their anxiety to preserve the Pact, they had to humour Hitler and praise his efforts at peace. British imperialism had to be painted in its blackest colours and had to be held responsible for the outbreak of war. This was in clear contradiction to all that they used to say in "Popular Front" days. British imperialism was in those days considered to be a "lesser evil" when compared with fascism and was to be defended by the proletariat from attacks of fascist countries. The German-Soviet Pact, however, could not last long and Hitler at last decided to invade the Soviet Union. The Indian Communists at that time did not think it necessary to change their attitude to war. They continued to regard it as imperialist notwithstanding Russia's entry into it on the side of the Allies. In support of this statement we would like to quote the following passage from the pamphlet entitled 'Soviet-German War' published by Polit-Bureau of the Communist Party of India, July 1941:—

"The Communist Party declares that the only way in which the Indian people can help in the just war which the Soviet is waging, is by fighting all the more vigorously for their own emancipation from the imperialist yoke. Our attitude towards the British Government and its imperialist war remains what it was. We must continue, nay, intensify our struggle against both. There can be no change in our policy until a people's government which unequivocally renounces imperialist aims in this war as well as in India and in the colonies, comes to power. We can render really effective aid to the Soviet Union only as a free people. That is why our campaign for the demonstration of our support and solidarity with the Soviet Union must be coupled with the exposure of the imperialist hypocrisy of the Chur-

chills and Roosevelts with the demand for the intensification of our struggle for Independence.

But as war advanced it began to be suggested in Communist circles that the character of the war had changed; that the defeat of U.S.S.R. would not weaken but strengthen imperialism and that therefore they must co-operate with the government in their war-efforts without making any conditions. This line of thought was discussed in detail by C.C.C. in one of its party letters dated 30th October 1941 (vol. I, no. 53) and it came to the conclusion "that only in the measure the people gather the strength to assert themselves against imperialists and their rule, only in that measure will they be able to line up in the international peoples' front for winning the war against fascism and for the Soviet people and the people of the world. Those who say: "Imperialists are rendering full help to the U.S.S.R. forced by their own contradictions and all that the Indian people had to do is to help them, are not advocating a peoples' policy, nor an Internationalist policy. They are following an Imperialist policy. They are echoing the imperialist lie. Reliance on the people, on the working class and NOT on the imperialists, this is the core of a truly internationalist policy....They are false internationalists and the deceivers of people who say that we can side the Soviet or win the war for the people by aiding the British Government's war efforts. The Indian communists had not been brought up in the atmosphere of people's front tactics otherwise they would not have taken long to change the war thesis. India's relationship with England also deterred them from giving up their attitude of opposition.

But at last the mandate came from abroad to support the war and they had to bow to it in spite of themselves. It became necessary for them now to sing a new song in support of their changed attitude. They began to say now that the war had become a people's war and as such deserved their support.

The people's front policy had prepared the world communists to support such a course of action in the event of an attack on Russia by Nazi Germany. The expression

'People's War' has been used on purpose to cause confusion of thought. It really means war of democracies against fascist states but the words chosen to express this idea convey a wrong impression as if people are taking an initiative in conducting this war to secure their rights. The expression has come in vogue again ever since the 'popular front' days. About the nature of people's front government it was said that it was neither a bourgeois government nor a proletarian but a 'people's government' which meant a coalition of anti-Nazi political parties. A war conducted against a fascist by anti-fascist elements—under whose leadership it did not matter (it may be bourgeois)—would be a people's war. They, therefore, think that the war can be easily converted into a people's war or a democratic war if governments are really anti-fascist governments and the test of this is that they are willing to become allies of the Soviet Union, in this war.

In case of aggression, people would naturally be led to the defence of the fatherland against the aggressor and they would be inclined to support their government if it seriously wanted to fight the enemy. It is the task of the revolutionary socialists and communists to expose the imperialist character of the war to the people to awaken their revolutionary spirit. The communists have betrayed socialism and have distorted Marxism and dialectics to justify their unconditional support to this war. It is our revolutionary duty to expose those Social-Chauvinists who are exploiting the proletariat's sympathy for the Soviet Union for enlisting their support in this imperialist war to the bourgeois governments of allied nations which are struggling to safeguard their capitalist class interests.

The world is passing through a crisis. It is revealing every political party in its true character. It behoves us to affirm our principles once again and to adhere to them firmly in the moment of crisis.

VIII

MARCHING ON (1945)

MARCHING ON



*The Communal Problem—A Socialist Viewpoint (1945)**

THE whole world is passing through a crisis and India is no exception. The crisis is so deep that every sphere of human activity has been powerfully affected by it. It has now become impossible to return to old conditions. The old institutions are crumbling on all sides and new systems of thought and organizations are slowly taking their place. In these critical times if we do not rise to the occasion and display qualities of constructive ability, statesmanship and courage our whole future may be jeopardised. We are at cross-roads and one false step may lead us to the wrong path. Therefore, much would depend upon the choice we make today.

At a time when the struggle for political power dominates the Indian scene and every community is wrangling to obtain as large a share as it can, there is every danger of the fundamental issues being overlooked in the heat of communal controversy. In such an atmosphere democracy may be smothered and the common man may be forgotten. It is, therefore, necessary to serve a reminder to the people that in the present world context the cause of freedom everywhere can only be served if we show our readiness for great social experiments and for the institution of broad-based democracy. Freedom cannot be achieved and retained by those who are timid, of narrow and sectional outlook, who are afraid of big changes and who have not the vision to see what the immediate future demands of

* In an interview to the Associated Press of India on June 22, 1945 at Lucknow.

us. Either we take big strides on the road or we take a retrograde step and go backward. There seems to be no middle position.

There are certain ideas in the air which need a critical examination. It is unfortunate that we are swayed by slogans rather than by ideas. But unless we remove our misconceptions no clear thinking will be possible. One such slogan which has impressed the public mind is the slogan of planned economy. People have somehow come to believe that there is some mystical power in such an economy. The truth is that planned economy, as such, means nothing.

The question is whether the economy is being planned for the few or for the many. The German economy under Hitler's rule was a planned economy. But no one would say that it planned society for civilization and democracy. Some form of planned economy has become inevitable and after the war no country would be able to return to old conditions. An economy which does not seek to build an equal society will lead to relinquishment of democratic institutions..

Another such slogan is the slogan of Congress-League Unity which is being equated with the slogan of Hindu-Muslim Unity, but it is only a snare and a delusion. Every true lover of the country should be an advocate of communal unity. Communal peace and amity are desirable things and we should work to that end. I also recognise that pacts and agreements are helpful in this task. But we should remember that unity between communities is essentially the result of a long process of integration. Pacts are, however, temporary expedients to serve temporary ends. But the unity of communities is a different affair. It is a slow and painful process.

Pacts can certainly accelerate this process but can in no way take its place. Pakistan without mutual transfer of population is no solution of the communal problem. Pakistan or no Pakistan, the communal problem will have to be tackled all the same and can be tackled only by laying emphasis on the economic issues which equally

affect the Hindu and Muslim masses of the country. Their economic interests are identical and a unity can be established only on the basis of their common interests. It is through common struggle for common economic interests that the unity will be forged.

I shall no doubt welcome a settlement of the communal question with the League, but this does not mean that I should advocate unity of action in the political field. Without identity of outlook and objectives such a unity will be either short-lived or will only end in strengthening the reactionary forces in the country. This, of course, does not exclude a joint front with the League on specific issues on which an agreement is possible.

I believe in communal unity and in political unity of all the progressive forces in the country. It is the progressive and not the religious or the communal character of an organisation that should be the determining factor in making alliances. I know that my view will be regarded as unorthodox in certain quarters and will not find favour with many who count today but I must not hesitate to state my views frankly on questions which agitate the public mind.

I realise the immense complexity of the present situation, and I also know that no simple formula can be evolved to meet the situation, but there are always short-range and long-range policies. If we are clear in our minds as to what we have to accomplish in the interests of the masses, we may, if absolutely pressed to do it, temporarily accept a scheme of things which we do not heartily approve. But we should never lose sight of the goal which we have to attain. We should not think that our masses are indifferent to political and economic matters. No constitution, however rigid and fool-proof, will be able to function in this country unless it seeks to elevate the common man. The masses are on the march and they will see to it that they are no longer hoodwinked and deceived.

2

Questions and Answers (1945)

[Arrested on August 9, 1942 along with the members of the Congress Working Committee and other Congress leaders in Bombay, after nearly thirty-four months detention at the Ahmednagar Fort, Acharya Narendra Deva along with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was removed to the Almora Jail in the U.P. They were released on June 18, 1945. Interviewed by the *Leader*, Acharyaji gave the following written replies to questions put to him on the significance of the August Revolution and on the Industrialisation of the country. They appeared on June 21, 1945.—Editor.]

Q. What is your opinion about August 1942 movement? Do you think it has failed?

A. The movement has failed in the sense that it has not achieved its objective. But no sacrifice cheerfully undergone for freedom and democracy is fruitless. Our people have shown wonderful spirit during the last three years and have demonstrated to the world their earnestness and determination to achieve their freedom. I am distinctly of opinion that there has been a powerful invigoration of nationalist forces as a result of this movement. I am not one of those who take shelter behind legal niceties and indulge in legal quibblings to belittle a great movement which has undoubtedly registered India's grim determination to come into her own. While on this subject I feel it my duty to put on record my appreciation of the initiative, sacrifice and capacity of organisation displayed by students of India. As they are going to be the future leaders of the country, it is a good augury and it gives me hope that India has a glorious future before her.

Q. What is your idea about Economic Planning of India so much talked about these days?

A. I am in favour of industrialisation of India, but key industries should be nationalised while other industries should be run under State supervision and control. But this is not enough. The feudal economy should be abolished and there should be a radical transformation of the land system. I mean to say that the class of middle men between the State and the tiller of the soil should be abolished. The productivity of the land should be raised and agriculture should be organised on a co-operative basis. Debts should be cancelled and the State should organise cheap credit for the benefit of the peasants. If we claim to be representatives of the masses and want to raise their economic status, this is the minimum we should aim to achieve in the immediate future. Every planned economy is not necessarily beneficial for the masses. The question is: who plans the economy and for whose benefit the economy is planned. There will certainly be enough room for cottage industries in any plan that we may draw. Any Government which claims to represent the nation must undertake this task. This is a simple test. A Government which fails in this test has no right to claim that it is a National Government.

3

*India and the Post-war World (1945)**

THE war has been won. The question is if the Allied Governments will be able to win the peace. As has been remarked by shrewd observers, if peace has to be won the foundation of principles on which the peace has to be built should have been laid during the period of war itself. If we have to avoid the outbreak of another war we must build an economic system which can offer progressive welfare for the masses. It is sufficient condemnation of the present system that full employment has been possible only during the war period. Without a fundamental change in the present system, democracy will be in a critical condition everywhere. We cannot go back to the *laissez faire* policy of the pre-war period. The society has to be planned for the well-being of the common man. In the words of Harold Laski, "even after a military victory over Nazism, still remains the deeper issue of a victory over ourselves."

PRINCIPLE AND EXPEDIENCY

Let us see if such a victory has been achieved. There is no doubt that Allied Governments have from time to time, issued statements breathing lofty sentiments of the dignity of man and of a deep feeling for humanity. We have the noble expressions of the Atlantic Charter and of the Four Freedoms. The Charter adopted at the San Francisco Conference reaffirms faith in the equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small, and stresses the necessity of living in unity and concord so that international peace may be secured. These are noble professions indeed but we all know how the Allied Governments have

* *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Annual Puja Number, 1945.

belied them in practice. Power politics is very much in evidence and principles have given place to expediency. As the end of war in Europe was in sight Mr. Churchill began to say that the war had ceased to be ideological. The rift between the Allies is widening and the pre-war suspicions are again raising their head. Unilateral decisions have been taken again and again.

IMPERIALIST POLICY REMAINS

In the world security plan that has been adopted by the United Nations a Trusteeship Council has been instituted to administer mandated territories and territories annexed from enemy countries, only in case of individual agreements. But where no such agreement is possible the Council will not be competent to undertake the administration of such territories. Besides, no machinery has been set up to supervise the administration of dependent territories administered by members of the United Nations and no compulsion can be used in their case to enforce the fulfilment of the aims and objectives which such members recognise under the Charter. Again, England, France and Holland are not prepared to relinquish their empires. Churchill's words "we mean to hold our own" still ring in our ears. The Labour Government has not returned Hongkong to China. Mr. Bevin's foreign policy is only a continuation of Churchill's policy. The British regard their empire as necessary for their wealth and power. This tenacious desire to hold on to the old world will not establish peace and economic security in the world.

It is also clear that no organisation will be able to keep the peace if its principal members do not mean to do so. It is the leaders and policies that will determine the shape of the coming world and not the platitudes indulged in world charters.

It seems as if the peace is already lost and this blood-bath has again been in vain. In such a situation it behoves every true lover of freedom and democracy to educate public opinion on the implications of the present situation and to organise it for fighting the forces of reaction in order to

bring back the lost peace. The next few years will be decisive and it behoves all the progressive forces of the world to unite together for achieving their common purpose. The masses are in an expectant mood and are ready to undergo heavy sacrifices only if they have the assurance that their sacrifices will not be in vain and will not be utilised to serve the interest of an already over-privileged class.

It is certain that if we acquiesce in what is happening today all the evils that followed the last war will return. The issues are so deep and are so intimately connected with human welfare that we can ignore them only at our peril.

If the above view is correct, Asia will not have a happy time. We should recognise that though sympathy and help should be welcome from every quarter, we shall have primarily to depend upon ourselves. It seems that the obduracy and utter selfishness of the imperialist powers will make it inevitable for the subject countries of the East to combine for striking a blow for freedom.

AMERICA AND RUSSIA

The tendency exhibited during the war to count too much on the goodwill and support of the U.S.A. is to be deprecated. It seems as if in the days to come the U.S.A. would more and more refuse to interfere in the domestic affairs of the British Empire. The news that there is going to be an Anglo-American alliance as against the Soviet Power, if correct, simply confirms the truth of the above viewpoint.

It is becoming more and more difficult to predict how Russia will act in a particular situation. Russia has been a great inspiration to the oppressed peoples of the earth but the hard realities of the European situation, it seems, have led her to abandon much of her old idealism. She wants to make herself completely free from the menace of foreign invasion. Her policy seems to be dictated by this sole consideration. She does not obviously trust some of her present allies. She has not forgotten as to what had happened to her all these years ever since the Russian

Revolution; encirclement by capitalist powers, intervention and economic blockade and their continuous refusal to enter into friendly relations with her. Russia is, therefore, taking all possible steps to prevent a repetition of such happenings. She is more afraid of her new allies than of her erstwhile enemy Germany.

Soviet Russia is interested in the Middle East, Iran and China. The British Government is trying to strengthen itself in the Middle East by establishing the Arab Federation under its leadership. It is giving the slogan of 'hands off Iran' and will give the Iranian Government its moral support against Russian interference. In China also Anglo-American interests demand the establishment of a strong national government. China is the only Asiatic country that has got a permanent seat on the Security Council and its future will be assured with the support and goodwill of the Asiatic people.

RUSSO-CHINESE TREATY

In this connection it is gratifying to note that Russia has displayed good sense by entering into a fair treaty with China and by giving a guarantee that it has no intention of interfering in its internal affairs. India's future is closely interwoven with the future of China and as such it will be our duty to stand with our great and true ally through thick and thin. It is now for the leaders of the Kuomintang to democratise their Government and to adopt radical measures to secure the well-being of the people. Let us hope that China's sympathy and help will be available to every Asiatic country that struggles for its freedom but we recognise that this will be possible only within the strict limits of its obligations to other members of the United Nations.

ROLE OF INDIA

India alone will be unfettered by any such consideration but its subjection today will not enable it to render any substantial help to others. India has, however, become a symbol of the freedom of Asia. Let us see that the symbol

is not broken. Our stand during the war has made India the question mark of the present epoch and all countries of Asia are eagerly looking forward to the day when India will be free because they feel instinctively that the key of their salvation is in India. They are aware of the fact that our stand during the war has been a demand for the freedom of all Asiatic and African peoples. Let us hope that India, while striving for its own freedom, will not forget its neighbours who are less fortunate and will, at least for considerations of self-interest if not for anything else, follow a good-neighbourly policy and will enter into unofficial non-aggression pacts and pacts of mutual friendship to ensure their future freedom. India should make her position clear in this respect by making a declaration to the effect that she has no intention to exploit her neighbours either politically or economically. She should never seek special privileges for or claim discrimination in favour of its nationals in Burma and Ceylon. She should advise Indians living abroad to identify themselves with the common people of those countries. India cannot follow a policy of isolation. Our isolationism has done us much harm in the past. Let us revive the ancient traditions when India had her contact with the surrounding world and when there was commerce in ideas and goods between India, Central Asia, China and the countries of South-East Asia.

EMPIRE IN THE EAST

Though England, France and Holland may want to retain their old empires in the East, they will find it more and more difficult to do so. The war has quickened the political consciousness of the Eastern peoples. They have got over their inferiority complex. The white man's prestige has been shaken to the utmost and cannot be any more retrieved. Burma, Malaya and Indo-China will not agree to return to the old position of subjection. If any such attempt is made, it will be strenuously resisted. India will not be alone in its struggle for freedom and democracy. India has a great role to play in Asia in the present epoch.

But this will be possible only if we realise our responsibility and do not miss the great opportunities that will present themselves from time to time. The August Resolution is our guiding star. It is a perfect resolution because it not only reiterates our determination to achieve our independence but it also defines the social contents of the concept of freedom. It wants to vest all political power into the hands of workers in fields and factories. It also expresses India's readiness to accept her international obligations. We have only to see that the resolution is not put into cold storage but is carried out in practice.

Let us hope that we shall have the wisdom, the vision, the courage and the statesmanship so to shape our policies as may enable the whole of Asia to achieve its freedom and further to lay the true foundations of full democracy everywhere in the East. This is the positive purpose for which we have to fight and if we have the compulsive drive, we are bound to succeed.

4

To the Students (1946)

[The revival and reorganisation of the Students Movement in this country after the Revolution of 1942, has been a very hopeful feature. Acharya Narendra Deva was elected President of the conference of the U.P. Provincial Student Congress held at Dehra Dun in the first week of February 1946. Owing to illness he was unable to attend but to the thousands assembled there, he sent the following message, embodying his ideas on how the students and youth movements should be organised.—Editor.]

A VIGOROUS youth movement is a sure indication of the instability of political and social conditions. It shows that the rights of the future are in conflict with the traditions of the past and that a new equilibrium is sorely needed. The nature of youth movement in each country is determined by its social conditions. After the First World War the European youth movement was a protest against the regimentation of discipline and chauvinism. It breathed high idealism and stood for individual freedom and human comradeship. Later on German youth was misled and betrayed into fascism.

But in subject countries the student movement will always be dominated by politics and so long as the national movement conitnues to be powerful the student movement will maintain its influence and strength.

Our slavery is the dominant fact of Indian life. Our first concern, therefore, is to win our freedom. But in the present world context freedom cannot be won, much less retained, if the movement of freedom is not inspired by social and spiritual values and does not express the actual needs and interests of the masses.

You have to decide whether your movement will be a mere symptom of a disease or will be the initiator of a new era and the architect of a new society. Times are ripe for a change. Basic institutions and ideas are disintegrating and the whole tendency is towards achieving a new integration.

If you have to realise your destiny you should stand for intellectual freedom, human solidarity and full democracy and should work for a new world order based on freedom, equality, social justice and peace. You should not render mere lip service to democracy but should cultivate democratic and co-operative habits. Paper constitutions will not in themselves usher in a new era because democracy is a matter of habit and tradition.

Above all you should serve the common man. Millions of our fellowmen, who produce all the wealth of the nation, suffer from chronic hunger and unemployment. They are steeped in ignorance and are oppressed and exploited. They look up to you for help and as future leaders of the nation it is your duty to study their needs and to serve them to the best of your ability.

Our struggle is entering a new phase which demands real unostentatious work. Every movement in this country will be judged in the future not by the noise that it makes but by the amount of genuine work it accomplishes. Celebration of national events and occasional demonstrations are necessary but we must realise that it is high time that we rose above the agitational plane.

I would earnestly appeal to you to engage in real solid work for the nation. Work should be your watchword. You should remember that politics is not your sole concern as you have also to serve cultural ends.

It is unfortunate that the tendency of the present age is to sacrifice intellectual independence, individual freedom and even moral principles to power-politics. The moral level has sunk low and every action is justified in the name of realism. This spirit is invading every organisation.

When this happens the movement loses its creative appeal because pre-occupation with power-politics tends to vitiate the very object which the movement professes to serve.

I would therefore appeal to you to fight this tendency and to set up a norm of conduct that will be in harmony with the noble aims that you proclaim.

I wish your conference every success and hope that it will be able to draw up a programme of work for the next year.

I shall commend it to you to devote yourselves to the cause of communal peace and harmony. It is a work of great political significance and deserves all your attention.

5

*The Cabinet Mission and India (1946)**

MR. ATTLEE'S statement has been well received in India. It is, on the whole, unexceptionable so far as it goes. But, as it does not reveal the British Plan, all that we can say in its favour is that it is conciliatory in spirit and is finely phrased. Some of our leaders have made no secret of the fact that they are optimistic about the success of the Mission while there are others, whose opinions are entitled to our respect, who are pessimistic and have sounded a note of warning.

Optimism and pessimism partly depend upon the individual's temperament and partly on the individual's reading of the situation. There is no doubt that the British Government can no longer govern India by force. The balance of forces has altered as a result of the world war. Indo-British conflict is now recognised to be an international affair. The Indian problem is not a domestic problem of the Empire but has become a world problem. The rising tide of anti-British sentiment in the Indian Army and Navy which has made it unreliable and the growing indiscipline in other services, even in the police, which is generally foreign to any sense of national honour or nationalism, in consequence of the development of a new sense of national self-respect, have made it necessary for the British Government to settle the Indian question on a new basis. The whole of Asia is ablaze and British imperialism is on its last legs. An intelligent Britisher, if he reviews the present position dispassionately, will come to the conclusion that the time has come when he should divest himself of the Empire. But men are governed more by emotions than by reason and self-interest clouds their judgment. The Bri-

* Contributed to the *National Herald* (Lucknow), April 7, 1946.

tish are very slow-moving and cautious. They are well-versed in the art of compromise and they proceed up to a certain point but refuse to advance further unless they are hard pressed to do so. They have succeeded so often in the past that they have come to think that they will muddle through again and avert the crisis. It is very difficult for them to follow unorthodox lines and they stick to forms and are wedded to tradition. In the case of India the Indo-British relationship has been marked by a series of broken pledges which has created intense distrust of Government's intentions in Indian mind. We cannot forget that its policy in India has been one of concession-cum-repression. Even today rumours are current that the Government is busy making preparations for crushing the Indian struggle which, it fears, will be launched in case the Mission has to return empty-handed. I do not attach any importance to these rumours.

I simply mention this fact in order to show that the people are distrustful of British intentions. It is pointed out by them that if the Government were really anxious to concede the Indian demand in full it would have proclaimed general amnesty in order to create a suitable atmosphere for a favourable reception of its proposals. It is pointed out that in England Mosley's gang was released overnight by the National Government as soon as the war in Europe came to an end. They did not even wait for the termination of the war in the Far East, while in India ardant patriots and beloved leaders of the people are still in prison when a Labour Government is governing England, although nine months have elapsed since the conclusion of the total war and even the arbitrary date fixed for marking the end of the war expired on April 1. The Government of India could at least set free its own detenus. They are only two in number—Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia, two brave and noble sons of India who are universally respected and loved. But the Government is wooden, unimaginative and reactionary. The British steel-frame is one of the stumbling blocks in the way of reconciliation between the Indian and British peoples.

Taking into account all the facts of the case one would not like to be too confident. Yet we cannot decline to enter into negotiations and to reason together in a spirit of goodwill. A calm atmosphere is no doubt helpful but this does not mean that the people should not express their views frankly in a restrained manner. While it is patriotic for British politicians to be reticent and not to make comments it is patriotic for an Indian politician to give frank expression to his views in dignified language.

I hope we should all remain firm to the last on fundamental issues. It has already been declared that no solution can be acceptable to us which leads to Balkanisation of India and that the question of Sterling Balances should be settled to the satisfaction of India. It has been officially said that the Congress would not negotiate a settlement if two constitution-making bodies are set up. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has done well in pointing out that the peoples of the Indian States should be represented on the constitution-making body. Mr. Attlee's statement failed to refer to the peoples of the States and only spoke of the Princely Order. The omission was significant and the Secretary of State for India has, in reply to a question at the press conference, in effect declared that no notice can be taken of them as they have no constitutional position. It is strange that a Labour Minister proposes to ignore the claims of the people on such a specious plea. Since when has Labour got enamoured of the Princely Order which is feudal in character and is a reactionary force in this country?

The Secretary of State has said in his statement that free India will also have to accept the liabilities while accepting the assets. We know that Princely Order is one of such liabilities. It has been bolstered up to fight the progressive forces in the country. Sacred treaty rights have been invoked to retain the order. Another liability is communal disunity which is a gift of British rule. We propose to liquidate these liabilities at the earliest possible date. Hindus and Muslims will establish communal harmony and weld into a nation. The Princely Order will be abo-

lished as it is an anachronism in the modern age. All the anti-democratic elements will have to be suppressed so that democracy may be able to function and flourish. It is, therefore, necessary that too much should not be made of the treaty rights. We know the truth about their sacredness. The Indian Democratic State should take the place of the Paramount power in relation to the Indian States. It will see to it that the States have a democratic constitution to begin with.

The special purpose of the present article is to draw public attention to one aspect of the question on which due emphasis has not been laid. I mean the so-called Treaty of Alliance to which a reference has been made in the Prime Minister's statement.

It is a favourite British device to concede nominal independence while retaining real controlling power in its own hands under the articles of agreement. As the sting of the scorpion is in its tail, as the sting of a legislative enactment is in its rules, so the sting of a British offer of independence is in the so-called treaty of alliance which invariably accompanies the settlement. I am not maligning British statesmen when I say so. I am only citing the judgment of a well-known writer on international affairs who cannot be accused of any bias against the British. I would like the reader to refer to the following passage in G. M. Gathorne-Hardy's 'A Short History of International Affairs, 1920 to 1938', a book issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. "When British diplomacy with its native love of compromise, wishes to retain the substance of control while conceding the shadow of independence, it is apt to resort to the method of a treaty. In February, 1922, Great Britain had told Egypt that she was henceforth an independent sovereign state, and had proceeded to secure, by appropriate reservations, that her independence should be qualified." (Page 226.)

In order to safeguard British interests and to protect the imperial line of communications British troops were stationed on Egyptian soil but it was said at the same time in the treaty that the presence of British troops would not

constitute an occupation and would not detract from her sovereign rights. The same method of treaty was followed in the case of Iraq and Ireland. In the latter case there was no declaration of independence as Ireland's geographical and strategic position did not entitle her in British eyes to receive that status. Ireland was vital to Britain's security and as such even illusory independence could not be granted. Being a mother country it could not be Dominion and as such it was not given the Dominion right of maintaining a navy. Security interests of Great Britain were paramount and the articles of agreement that formed the basis of the treaty of alliance (1922) were dictated by this consideration. Limitations were also imposed on the raising of armaments and the training of armed forces and some of the arguments that were used at the time were ridiculous. It was said that unlimited armaments and armed forces could not be allowed in the interests of Ireland herself because if both the North and South had the unrestricted right of raising armaments and forces it would provoke conflicts between them. In the case of Iraq restrictions were imposed on her sovereign rights before it could be allowed to become a full member of the League of Nations and it was all the time being said that her sovereignty would be respected. Thus, under colour of advice or assistance or for safeguarding British interests military and other clauses were introduced in the treaty and it was proclaimed that independence had been granted. I do not see how this treaty can be called a treaty of alliance and, further, how it can be said to be based on independence. The treaty was obtained under duress and as they were small countries they could ill-afford the luxury of sacrificing even what little power was conferred upon them.

I do not wish to suggest for a moment that the Indian treaty would be an exact copy of these treaties. Even these treaties have been revised from time to time and some of the former restrictions have been removed. The Egyptian treaty is going to be revised again. But I fear that some military clauses will be there for security reasons. As

there is no Indian Navy worth the name they will claim the right of the British Navy to guard the Indian coasts as long as India is not in a position to have a strong navy of her own. They will certainly allocate a proportion of naval defence to India from the very beginning, but as for many years to come India would not be able to build her own navy, the British navy will continue to defend the coasts of India. England would also demand, in the interests of the Empire, the possession of certain naval and strategic bases, at least in times of war. An attempt may also be made to get us to agree to the stationing of British troops in India for defence against foreign aggression. These claims must be stoutly resisted. The British Army must clear out of India. The Indian Army, such as it is, is good enough for us. What deficiencies there are can be made good with international co-operation. In any case, we do not expect any great power to invade India after the British quit this land. Any concessions made by us regarding the Army may prove troublesome.

In this connection it is relevant to answer the question why India does not want Dominion Status. The objection to Dominion Status is not merely sentimental. There are good reasons why India should refuse that status. In the first place, India is alien to other members of the British Commonwealth both in culture and race. Again, South Africa, which has so much colour prejudice and which treats Indians as helots of the Empire, is also a member of the Commonwealth. A very cogent argument against it is that India does not want to be tied down to the British economic system. It wants to evolve its own economic and social systems. It is also against becoming subservient to British foreign policy. Although the dominions have a voice in the determination of Empire's foreign policy, the instrument of that policy is the British foreign office. India's status and interests demand that it should evolve its own independent foreign policy. It has to play an important role in the defence of South-East Asia. It will have to work for peace not only because its traditions have

been such but also because its national interests will demand the pursuit of a peaceful policy.

Free India's energies will be absorbed in the task of construction for many years and naturally an external distraction in the shape of war will postpone its social and economic progress. It will, therefore, be essential for her to live at peace not only with her neighbours but also with all the big powers. It will enter into non-aggression pacts with every country and will refuse to be involved in the wars of others. Besides, Britain's intentions as regards Arab countries, Iran, Burma and Malaya are not clear. Its present attitude towards them is not a happy augury. The old power-politics is still going on. England does not want to forego its oil concessions in Iran and wants to retain its strategic hold on the Persian Gulf. It is likely that it may enter into an agreement with Russia on the basis of recognition of Russia's legitimate interests in Northern Iran. They will try to maintain peace not by shedding Imperialism and laying the foundations for a new international order, based on justice and equality, but by allocation of spheres of interest between rival powers by mutual agreement. This reminds us of the old pattern of 1907 when all the principal points in dispute between England and Czarist Russia were settled in a similar manner. By entering the British orbit we shall be making ourselves responsible for all the sins of British imperialism and, at the same time, involving ourselves in England's wars.

It will be argued that for the safety of the world India's shores cannot be allowed to remain undefended. To this my answer would be that after the destruction of Japan there is no harm if the Indian shores remain unguarded for a short while. If England and the U.S.A., the only big naval powers of today, have pacific intentions the weakness of India's coastal defence will not matter. Russia is a land and not a naval power. Moreover, Russia will respect India's sovereignty if the other two big powers also scrupulously respect it. It may also be pointed out that it will not take very long to have a fair--sized navy for coastal defence.

We cannot, therefore, enter into an alliance with Britain for mutual defence. It would certainly make Russia suspicious and will make her unfriendly towards us and we should not forget that Russia's friendship, even neutrality, will mean much for us in the coming days. Our interest lies in keeping out of all political rivalries of big powers. We cannot favour one party at the expense of others. There cannot be a favoured nation's clause for Britain in the treaty.

A treaty will have to be negotiated for settling certain claims of England. There can also be inserted a clause as regards trade provided the arrangement is mutually advantageous. There can also be a non-aggression pact. But there can be no treaty of alliance in the sense that India joins the Anglo-Saxon group as against Soviet Russia.

6

*The Common Man and the Congress (1946)**

AS a result of the mass struggle of 1942-43, the Congress has immensely gained in strength and influence. Vast sectors of people who were left untouched before, have been brought under its sway today and owe allegiance to it.

The spirit of freedom has penetrated the Indian Army. The army has today received a new impulse. The old barriers between the Indian Army and the civil population have broken down and the Indian Army is slowly shedding its mercenary character and is realising that it exists not only to defend the country from foreign aggression but also to liberate it from foreign yoke. Strange as it may seem, the Indian Army today, composed as it is of various religious communities, looks to the Congress for guidance and leadership, rather than to various communal organisations. It is a very significant fact and it speaks volumes in favour of our soldiers' political maturity. A soldier respects a fighter and despises those who indulge in mere sabre-rattling.

The national struggle is also reflected in the increasing vigour of the student movement. Thus the struggle has given us rich dividends all round. There is unprecedented enthusiasm for the Congress on all sides and the whole country is resounding with cries of "Jai Hind". "Quit India" has become our battle-cry and the August struggle is invoked again and again as proof of our determination to be free.

But the battle has yet to be won. We failed in the first round. But we must venture forth again when the time is ripe. We know the British Government has emerged

* From the well-known Socialist Weekly, *Janata* (New Delhi). 10th Feb. 1946

out of the war as a second-rate power. We also know that it has to face tremendous difficulties everywhere in the world. Yet, we cannot be blind to the fact that imperialism knows so many ways of rehabilitating itself. We must see that it is dethroned from its seats of authority. We know that without hard and intelligent work we cannot succeed. We cannot afford to be complacent. No nation has yet attained its freedom without a struggle. The imperialist designs of Great Britain are not hidden from us. Its efforts to bolster up Dutch and French autocracies in Indonesia and Indo-China unmistakably proves its own intentions to maintain its hold on its colonies and dependencies. The foreign policy of the Labour Government is merely a continuation of Churchillian policy.

AUGUST RESOLUTION

For those who are pledged to the August Resolution, electoral contests are only a form of preparation for the struggle. If we enter legislatures, it is only to make a revolutionary use of them. We shall not enter a Constituent Assembly that does not truly mirror and represent the wishes of the people and is not clothed with sovereign authority. We do not want to be dictated to by others nor can we tolerate any limitations that may be imposed upon the sovereign authority of the people to frame their own constitution. We want unfettered freedom to shape our own destiny. Above all we want the common man to speak out his mind and write his own charter of liberties.

The Congress has declared its adherence to the August Resolution and expressed its determination to translate it into action. The resolution links up nationalism with internationalism and wants to build a social order in which all power will vest in producers.

Let us examine the implications of the resolution, if we do not wish to remain satisfied with mere idealist phrases. Without the active co-operation and leadership of the common man such an order cannot be built. It would be self-delusion to think that the middle classes would, after winning freedom, willingly transfer all power to the toil-

ing masses. This has never happened in history. India is no exception. It is the masses themselves that have to take power into their hands. Those of the other classes who have identified themselves with the masses can only help them in the task but they cannot make a present of power to the people like a Christmas gift. An appreciation of this fact will compel us to change the character of our organisation. The doors of the Congress will have to be thrown wide open to peasants and workers, and such elements as are opposed to the interests of the masses will have to be eliminated. The interests of the masses will be supreme and every single interest that conflicts with the interests of the people, will have to be discarded. If this is done, class organisations may become unnecessary. But a middle-class dominated organisation cannot be expected to do this. In that case, peasants and workers should be encouraged to have their own unions and no effort should be made to control their independent organisation.

They should be allowed to organise themselves for the security of their economic class interests. Their demands should be incorporated in the Congress manifesto or its policy and its programme. These class organisations should serve as a guide to the Congress in the sphere of their economic interests. It is in this way that the Congress can voice the economic demands of the people and truly represent their interest. The Congress can do the political schooling of these organisations and take economic programmes from them. The political and social emancipation of the people can be achieved only by such interaction.

They should be saved from all kinds of oppression and exploitation and should be organised for self-defence against anti-social forces. Thus we shall be able to create bases in the countryside which will be seats of power for democracy.

We have also to decide whether we accept the theory of spontaneity or are in favour of giving a deliberate and purposeful character to the spontaneous movement. It is true that they cannot be carried to a successful issue with-

out there being a trained personnel which can guide the movement and direct its course.

If the proposition is correct, the Congress has to be transformed into a vigorous and disciplined instrument of revolution.

It should become a real and active political force, enforcing strict discipline. But the traditions of the Congress and the utterances of our foremost leaders would lead us to think that the Congress believes in a spontaneous movement and is averse to controlling and guiding its course. It will perhaps be nearer the truth to say that it does not advocate mass action which is of a spontaneous character. It definitely does not want the masses to seek their own path of revolution. It will remain content with some form of non-co-operation and civil resistance of the regulated type. But it is legitimate to ask whether such non-co-operation and resistance will prove effective.

In order to be effective, the Congress organisation has to be overhauled and renovated. It is becoming politically effete. It seems as if we are losing sight of our goal and are regarding an intermediate stage as the final stage of our journey. A craze for power seems to have overtaken most of our workers who are hankering after small places of influence and authority. The parliamentary programme is exercising its corrupting influence and the petty-bourgeois is really demonstrating its pettiness. Revolutionary fervour seems to be in abeyance for the moment and there is the ugly and disgusting sight of workers jostling each other in a scramble for seats in legislature.

Lenin said about Russia that there are many people but no men. This is also true about ourselves. We have seldom taken care to look after the education of our workers. We do very little to stimulate the thought and intelligence of our workers and to educate them about the problems of our country. The efficiency of the worker must be raised and his practical ability to perform specific tasks developed. Again the local committees have only to execute orders from above. All initiative comes from above and even on fundamental issues they are not consulted. Thus,

they lack all capacity for independent action and are never encouraged to cultivate their own opinions.

Our work still continues to be of an agitational character though we have long passed that stage.

All this must be changed. We must start a New Life Movement for the villages which should have in view the removal of the cultural backwardness of the people, thus giving them new aims and aspirations and developing co-operative and democratic habits among them.

HINDUS AND MUSLIMS

The communal problem should be tackled in a scientific manner. The issue should not be simplified in a native manner by falsely imagining that the mere disappearance of the third party will automatically solve the problem, or that Mr. Jinnah is the evil genius of the League. Most of us do not know the Muslim mind nor do we make any effort to know it. We should know that there are unseen forces which are making Muslim history and it should be our endeavour to understand them. There should be an efficient secretariat at the centre for the study of problems that vitally concern us.

ADJUSTMENT—NOT SECTIONALISM

We must recognise that the world is passing through a period of strife and conflict and that India is no exception. A vigorous student movement is always the symptom of the lack of integration of a civilisation with the existing social structure. It reflects the growing instability of political and social conditions. The revolt of youth against all traditional authority is not an accident and the problem is not solved by saying that the present generation has fallen low in morals. We must ask the question as to why there is such a great gulf between the old and the young and why youth stands for new ideas, standards and values.

We are at the close of an epoch and unless a new equilibrium is established and there is a new integration which is acceptable to all the important elements, the era of turmoil and disorder will continue. In such a period only

an organisation that has the vision and courage to find the greatest common measure, that can give satisfaction to principal elements and define the aims in a comprehensive manner, can successfully deal with this phenomenon. The remedy lies not in narrowing the basis still further but in broadening it and finding a new equation which will eradicate the deep causes that lie at the door. A new adjustment has always to be made when new forces are thrown up by a national struggle. But this adjustment should not take the form of sectionalism. The church should remain a church and not degenerate into a sect. It is only in this way that sectarianism can be successfully fought and the church can retain within its bosom the different sects, which differ in certain minor points of doctrine and discipline but which all equally owe allegiance to the basic principles which the church professes and upholds.

Just a few words to sectarians. It is true that a theoretical foundation is necessary for a revolutionary movement. But we should not be dogmatic and should always be ready to learn from experience. Theory and practice are conditioned by each other. Lenin was fond of repeating an observation of Goethe that "theory is grey but the tree of life is ever green." He has also said that an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory. Theory divorced from practice breeds a pestilence of thought. Similarly, action not informed by principles and not inspired by idealism is blind and chaotic. Besides, clarity of thought comes from practice alone and thought-forms have a tendency to become static if they are not influenced by living reality.

There is one special danger to which we are open today. Democracy does not depend only on the spirit but also on the form of organisation through which it functions. The evolution of the Congress has been more and more in the direction of democracy. But, for sometime past, there has been a retrogression. The emphasis in the modern age is shifting from the individual to the organisation and the collectivist bias is predominant. This inevitably leads to the curtailment of democracy and to the imperceptible development of totalitarian tendencies. In the name of

discipline and solidarity let us not have an exclusive and close organisation which may become in future a vehicle of totalitarian power politics. An organisation that fights for power will impose its forms on the state it will found. The Kuomintang is an illustration in point. A national organisation, if it wants to organise democracy, will always have a place for those groups which have spiritual affinities with it and are willing to abide by its decision.

Before we can decide what the new organisational shape of the Congress should be, we have to answer some of these questions. New forces have come into being. We have to take into account some new factors of the situation. A fruitful policy can be formulated only if we rise to the occasion and show courage and breadth of vision, to be able to make the fullest use of our opportunities.

Above all, let us not regard the common man as narrow and selfish. His ideology is directed to secure the general emancipation of the socially disinherited. If we want to serve him aright, let us not patronise him but set him on his feet so that he may realise his destiny and initiate a world movement of the higher culture. Let us also remember that in order to perform the task assigned to him by history, he needs courage and independence even more than he needs his daily bread.

We have suffered the agony of foreign oppression for a very long time. We have been denied all just participation in the progress of the age in which we live. If the wrongs of the past have to be righted, if we are to obtain the privilege of free development and if we are to elevate the common man, we must acquire complete independence of our nation. But we must do it without ousting the common man or destroying the conditions of his freest and fullest development. Even while we fight for his political freedom, we must endeavour to secure to him the basis for organised effort intended to encompass his social emancipation. Self-rule must mean self-choice and self-control even for the common man.

7

*On 9th August, 1946**

AUGUST 9 is a historic date in the annals of India's freedom movement. It was the first serious effort of the Indian people to throw off foreign yoke. The rumblings of a people's revolution were heard for the first time in this country and it was the upsurge of a people who had seen a new vision and who were inspired by a new hope.

The people acted like an elemental force and the British rule was shaken to its very foundations. But because of certain inherent weaknesses, the movement could not achieve its objective. The movement was ruthlessly suppressed by the imperialist paraphernalia and repression and terrorism were let loose on the people. There were detentions, imprisonments, floggings, imposition of collective fines, bombings by air, murder, arson and loot and suppression of the Press and civil liberties.

The nation seemed to be paralysed in face of terrible repression and there was widespread frustration. But this mood of frustration was temporary because the nation had seen a vision which no amount of repression and police 'zulum' could efface and as soon as the war was over people began to recover. The INA trials and the RIN strike were significant events and they clearly proved that the spirit of revolt was not dead but as a matter of fact rekindled in the new world context of the post-war period. The forces that had been kept in check during the war under military rule were unleashed on all sides and there was a spontaneous outburst of people's revolt in many subject countries. The times are indeed revolutionary and pregnant with great possibilities. The British Empire is

* *National Herald* 7th August, 1946.

breaking up on all sides. It is not the strength of the British that is keeping us back from entering into our inheritance but it is lack of revolutionary determination in us that is responsible for the delay.

The majestic struggle of 1942 was the outcome of the momentous Resolution of August 8. The Resolution defines the Congress objective and lays down its policy. It not only aims at achieving national independence but also expresses the great need of laying the foundations of a new society in the new economic and political set-up that it visualises. It wants all power to be transferred to the masses. It breathes a lofty spirit of internationalism. It makes it clear that a free India would not lead a life of isolation; but she would be willing to play her part and discharge her obligations for organising the world on a co-operative basis. It proclaims that India would enter a federation of free nations and will make her contribution to world peace.

The Resolution of August 8 is in keeping with the spirit of the age and recognises the demands of the hour. It sounds the note of democracy and internationalism and proclaims the supremacy of the Common man. The Resolution demands reiteration today and all its aspects need to be underlined. The outlook is bright and let us not dissipate our energies in directions that are wasteful. Let us on this memorable day make a solemn resolve to implement the Resolution.

We should remember that we owe a debt to the martyrs of 1942 to accomplish the task so nobly begun by them. Let us set our hands to the great task of organisation so that when the hour of destiny arrives we may not be found unprepared. We should also have a clear conception of our tasks so that we may not only liquidate foreign imperialism but may also establish a new social order based on democracy, co-operation, economic equality and social justice.

IX

A *SHORT STUDY SYLLABUS* (1945)

A SHORT STUDY SYLLABUS (1945)

THIS Syllabus is meant for the study circles of the Student Movement. It assumes a developed ability to grasp ideas. It is intended to supply the intellectual background to the study of practical social and political problems; to equip our youth with a proper, scientific approach to national as well as international problems. So equipped, our young men and women should be able successfully to analyse our day to day questions, arrive at proper solutions and lay down necessary lines of activity for the achievement of the purposes in view.

It will be noted that the Syllabus does not attempt to propagate any particular set of opinions. It is not a scheme for regimentation of thought. Nor does it however accept the principle of a sort of intellectual neutrality. It generally accepts the progressive trend in thinking. It aims at developing the faculty of critical analysis and a rational approach to our problems among our young people. It expects to be able to produce a mental climate and a culture among the youth of India that would be free from narrow, religious, caste, class, racial and even national prejudices and predilections, and would provide a congenial background and basis for the growth of a firm rational outlook, based on a broad humanism and a living faith in the great ideals of social justice, freedom and equality.

At the end of the Syllabus will be found names of books arranged in sections. It is not intended that all students should read every chapter of all the books mentioned in each section. Some of these books or portions of them are obviously meant for advanced, thorough or detailed studies. It is presumed that at least three to five books would be necessary out of each section to give a sufficient idea of the subjects mentioned. The selection of these books for particular students will be the work of the leaders of these

study circles in consultation with their teachers or elders. Some of the most essential books have been marked with asterisk. Most of these books should be available in University, College or good public libraries.

General Sociology

Scope and method of Sociology——Great Society and society—Individuals and society—Their inter-connected and inter-dependent relationship—The individual and his environment—Heredity *vis-a-vis* environment—Psychological basis of social life—Groups, classes, castes, communities—Associations, institutions, customs—Race, tribe, nation, national feeling and nationalism—State, its nature and role in society—Natural, geographical or territorial basis of social life—Economic interpretation of history—Laws of Social change—Evolution and Revolution.

World Today and India

A general social and political survey of India, Europe, America, Russia and China during the last 25 years—Cultural currents of Asia and Europe in retrospect and prospect—Freedom movements of the world and India, dealing with political as well as economic struggles, struggles between classes and struggles between countries.

The Economic Problem

Modern economic society—Economic theory—Economic crisis—Imperialism, Fascism and War—Mastering of unemployment and banishing of poverty—Planned Economy—Creation of the social basis and machinery for planned production—History of economic thought.

The Political Problem

The State in historical perspective—The modern State in theory and practice—Feudal society, Bourgeois Democracy, Social Democracy, Fascism—The state that will master unemployment and banish poverty—The political basis for the freest and fullest development of human personality—Class dictatorship in retrospect and prospect—The problem

of despotism and bureaucracy—The democratic method; the rule of the people, of the majority, through representative and responsible government, grounded in fundamental civil liberties—Extent of centralism, federalism and pluralism necessary in future State structure—Programme for social revolution without involving destruction of human personality—History of political thought.

Student and Youth Movement

Study of the student and the youth movements of the world, with special reference to the programme of cultural development of world youth and the development among the youth of a common world culture based on humanism and inspired by the determination to fight for the ideals of peace, freedom and progress.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED

General Sociology

1. Mac Iver: Elements of Social Science (*Methuen*)
2. Karl Manheim: Man and Society (*Kegan Paul*)
3. *Ginsberg: Sociology (*Home University*)
4. Barnes: Sociology and Political Theory (*Alfred A. Knopp, New York*)
5. Engels: Origin of the Family, Private Property and State (*Burman Publishing House, Calcutta*)
6. Gordon East: Geography Behind History (*Thomas Nelson & Sons*)
7. *C. A. Beard: Economic Basis of Politics (*Allen & Unwin*)
8. *G. Plekhanov: Fundamental Problems of Marxism. (*Burman Publishing House, Calcutta*)
9. John Macmurray: Creative Society
10. *J. B. Coates: Ten Modern Prophets.
11. *R. Niebuhr: Moral Man and Immoral Society

World To-day and India

12. *Jawaharlal: Glimpses of World History
(*Kitabistan*)
13. *Lipson: Europe (1914-19)
(*A and C Black*)
14. Hansluck: Foreign Affairs (1919-37)
(*Cambridge University Press*)
15. G. M. Hardy: A Short History of International Affairs (1920-39)
(*Oxford University Press*)
16. Longsam: A Narrative of War since 1939 (1941 Ed.)
(*Macmillan*)
17. Karl Manheim: A Diagnosis of Our Times
(*Kegan Paul*)
18. *Arthur Rosenberg: A History of Bolshevism.
(*Oxford University Press*)
19. *Maurice Hindus: Mother Russia
20. James Burnham: Managerical Revolution
21. *Hans Kohn: A History of Nationalism in the East
(*Routledge*)
22. *James Truslow Adams: Epic of America
(*Routledge*)
23. Tang Leangli: Inner History of the Chinese Revolution
(*Routledge*)
(*International Publishers, New York*)
24. Tawney: Land and Labour in China
(*Allen & Unwin*)
25. *Lin Yutang: My Country and My People
(*W. Heinemann, London*)
26. William James: Varieties of Religious Experience
(*Longmans*)
27. A. F. Hattersley: A Short History of Western Civilisation.
28. Bhagwan Das: Social Organisation of the Hindus
(*Cambridge University Press*)
28. *J. B. Kriplani: The Gandhian Way of Life
30. *My Experiments with Truth
(*Navajivan Press*)

31. *Jawaharlal Nehru: My Autobiography.
(Bodley Head, London)
32. *S. Radhakrishnan: Hindu View of Life
(Cambridge University Press)
33. *Tara Chand: Influence of Islam on Indian Culture
(Indian Press, Allahabad)
34. *Shelvankar: The Problems fo India
(Penguin)
35. Dodwell: Modern India
(Arrow Smith, Bristol)
36. *W. C. Smith: Modern Islam in India
(Minerva Book Depot, Lahore)
37. *Shaukatullah Ansari: Pakistan
38. *Wadia & Merchant: Our Economic Problem
(New Book Company, Bombay)
39. *Margaret Read: Indian Peasantry Up-rooted (Summary of Whitley Commission Report on Indian Labour)
(Longmans)
40. *Floud: Report of the Floud Commission on Land Revenue in Bengal (1938) Vol. I.

The Economic Problem

41. *Henry Clay: Economics for General Readers
(Macmillan)
42. M. Dobb: Political Eoconomy and Capitalism
(Gollancz)
43. *K. Kautsky: Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx
44. *G. D. H. Cole: An Intelligent Man's Guide Through World Chaos
(Gollancz)
45. *G. D. H. Cole: Planned Economy
46. G. D. H. Cole: Machinery of Socialist Planning
(Hogarth Press)
47. *J. A. Hobson: Imperialism
48. Leonard Woolf: Imperialism & Civilisation
(Hogarth Press)
49. A. Gray: Development of Economic Doctrines
(Longmans)

50. *(A) Bombay Plan (B) Gandhian Plan (C) People's Plan

The Political Problem

51. *H. J. Laski: Introduction to Politics (*Allen & Unwin*)
52. H. J. Laski: Liberty in the Modern State (*Pelican*)
53. *C. E. M. Joad: Introduction to Modern Political Theory (*Oxford University Press*)
54. Ivor Brown: Meaning of Democracy (*Duckworth*)
55. G. D. H. Cole: A Guide to Modern Politics (*Gollancz*)
56. *Sydney Webb: Decay of Capitalist Civilisation (*Fabian Sons, Ltd. London*)
57. *F. Engels: Socialism—Utopian & Scientific (*Burman Publishing House, Calcutta*)
58. *Lenin: State & Revolution (*Burman Publishing House, Calcutta*)
59. *Lenin: Leftwing Communism (*Burman Publishing House, Calcutta*)
60. J. Starchey: Theory and Practice of Socialism (*Gollancz*)
61. *Bertrand Russell: Roads to Freedom (*Allen & Unwin*)
62. *R. H. Tawney: Acquisitive Society (*Allen & Unwin*)
63. *G. D. H. Cole: Fabian Socialism (*Allen & Unwin*)
64. H. J. Laski: The Strategy of Freedom (*Allen & Unwin*)
65. R. G. Gettel: History of Political Thought (*Allen & Unwin*)

Student and Youth Movement

66. *Mahatma Gandhi: To Students
67. J. H. Randall: The Making of the Modern Mind

68. T. C. Wang: Youth Movement in China
(New Republic N. York),
69. *R. Lincoln: Young Minds for Old
(Muller)
70. J. W. Taylor: Youth Welfare in Germany
(Baird-Ward Co. U. S. A.)
71. *Klaus Menhert: Youth in Soviet Russia
(Allen & Unwin)
72. Basil Mathews: Young Islam on Trek
(H. O. P. Edinburgh)

X

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (1946)

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU (1946)

ALTHOUGH Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru felt a vague attraction towards Fabian Socialism while he was a student in England yet it is definite that he came decisively under the impact of socialist thought during sojourn in Europe in the years 1926-1927. Many intellectuals and sensitive souls were deeply impressed with the Russian Revolution and much more with the Soviet experiment for the reorganisation of the economic foundations of society in order to secure expanding welfare of the masses and for the elimination of all forms of exploitation. They also had come to the conclusion that mere political freedom was of no avail to the masses unless it was accmpanied by fundamental changes in the existing economic and social structure of society. The problem of social injustice, exploitation, poverty and misery tormented them and in colonial countries where mass-awakening was phenomenal in the period after the first world war, intelligent men everywhere put to themselves the question whether mere political independence would be able to solve these problems. The Russian experiment had shown the way and every searching heart in India began to redefine Swaraj in terms of the masses and to put social contents into political concept of freedom.

On his return from Europe in 1927 Jawaharlalji began to give a new orientation to the Congress. He was a Tilakite in his student days and was a staunch nationalist. But his socialist outlook now made him see things in a new light and for him the question of questions was what should be the tangible shape of Swaraj for which we fought and what should be the method of achieving such an objective.

Marxism had also given him a scientific method of studying concrete problems. The application of such a method

enables you to make a penetrating analysis of men and events because you see them not in isolation but in their relation to the social background from which they have issued. Such an analysis deserves the unity that finds men and events and which conditions them reciprocally. This also enables you to follow every event and every individual in relation to the epoch and to study in this framework the role which is proper to the individual and its significance in the present. Jawaharlalji tries to apply this method to our problems and is able to give us as synthetic a picture as possible. He is also able to reveal tendencies of objective value. He tries to understand the unseen historic forces of which individuals are only transient symbols. He is thus not deceived by external appearances but he dives deep below the surface and tries to understand the working of forces which lie hidden from our view.

A fundamental question that needed a clearer enunciation was whether our national objective was at best only the achievement of Dominion Status or that of complete independence.

The question was never clearly answered and there was always a danger—nay a certainty—that a policy of compromise and settlement with foreign imperialism would be followed. It was, therefore, necessary to raise this fundamental issue of our political goal so that policies of compromise and capitulation should come to an end and make the path clear for a programme of revolutionary action. The question had been raised for the first time by the Extremist Party under the leadership of Lokamanya Tilak in the days of the Swadeshi Movement as early as 1906. Sporadic efforts continued to be made thereafter from time to time but without any success. Jawaharlalji raised the issue in 1927 at the Madras session of the Congress and succeeded in getting a resolution passed in favour of complete independence without any opposition although the old creed was still retained intact. Mahatmaji, however, who did not attend the Congress that year did not like the resolution. Besides, the position was not quite satisfactory so long as the creed was not altered. It was, therefore,

thought necessary to do some spade-work in the country through the instrumentality of some new organisation before the Congress could be expected to accept the new creed. It was for this reason that Jawaharlalji founded the 'Independence for India League' in 1928 in collaboration with others. It is noteworthy that the object of the League was not only the achievement of complete independence for India but also the reconstruction of Indian society on the basis of social and economic equality. The question was raised in the Calcutta Congress Session in 1928 and after much debate and discussion was put off for another year when at Lahore the Congress irrevocably pledged itself to the goal of complete independence.

It shrould be clearly understood that while advocating this political objective Jawaharlalji never wanted India to lead a life of isolation. In the first place the modern age is one of inter-dependence and being a socialist he could not be guilty of narrow nationalism. As a matter of fact the goal of Dominion Status if realised, would prevent India from participating directly in the wide international life of the world. Otherwise she would be tied down to the political and economic system of which England is the representative. We are alien to the members of the British Commonwealth in race, religion, language and the system of political and economic thought which the Commonwealth stands for is also alien to us. India, with its ancient civilisation and its vast resources in men and material, would be tied down to the charriot-wheel of Great Britain and would not have the freedom to play its role in Asia. India is an Asiatic power and its proper place is primarily in the federation of Asiatic people.

Jawaharlalji took great interest in class-organisation. He was elected President of the All-India Trade Union Congress in the year 1929 and it has been his constant endeavour to make the Congress interest itself in the economic struggles of the workers. He tried to bring economic questions to the forefront. The resolution of Fundamental Rights passed at the Karachi Congress in 1931 was his contribution. His activities brought about a general radical-

isation of political thought in the country. He also insisted on the adoption of a militant programme in the Congress. He was the first to draw the country's attention to the war danger and he prepared the country for resistance to the Imperialist War. He advocated the cause of the peoples of Indian States. He brought India more and more in the international field and by his internationalism secured the support of the progressive thought of the world for the Indian cause. He induced the Congress to take keen interest in international affairs and the resolutions passed from time to time on international questions were his handiwork. He also slowly evolved a foreign policy for unofficial India as represented by the Congress.

There is no doubt that the personality of Gandhiji and the mass movement initiated by the Congress under his leadership attracted wide attention abroad and created an interest in Indian affairs, but it is also true that if the Congress had not under Jawaharlalji's inspiration evinced an interest in world affairs and had expressed its keen desire to ally itself with the progressive forces of the world, the world would not have shown that abiding and deep interest which it has shown. Progressives everywhere were interested in Gandhiji's novel experiment and supported India's claim for independence but they regarded Gandhiji as essentially a nationalist while, to them, Jawaharlalji was a socialist and an internationalist. It was the appreciation of the fact that young India as represented by Jawaharlalji, did not believe in the policy of isolationism but was eager to play its part in an international organisation, that was mainly responsible for the world's keen interest in Indian affairs. There is no gainsaying the fact that this is the outstanding contribution of Jawaharlalji.

The fact that he has become today an international figure is symbolic of the realisation that he has won international recognition for India and the fact that he is an idol of the Indian masses is symbolic of the Congress having won the affection and loyalty of the masses. For, we must not forget that Jawaharlalji's life and activities are indissolubly bound up with the Congress and that he has completely

identified himself with it. There have been occasions when he has vitally differed from certain policies and decisions of the Congress, but when once a decision is taken, he has given his wholehearted support to it. Typical of his attitude was his saying that "The Congress can do no wrong," when in spite of his opposition, the Congress in 1937 decided in favour of office-acceptance.

By this process of identification he has powerfully influenced the Congress and given it his own unmistakable impress. Without giving his adherence to any socialist group, he easily became the spearhead of broad revolutionary and socialist forces in the country.

This is why he is adored by the youth of India. His forceful and charming personality, his spirit of adventure, his vitality and vigour attract youth everywhere. This is also the secret of his immense popularity with the Punjab masses. The Punjab is politically backward and yet the people of the Punjab are mad after him. I can explain this phenomenon on no other ground than that he is a vital figure in Indian politics that loves adventure, admires courage, self-sacrifice and energetic action.

Jawaharlalji's principal work has been to bring the Indian National movement in line with modern trends and to interlink it, if possible, with the international movement for democracy and socialism. It is obvious that, Congress being a multi-class organisation, cannot be an instrument for establishing a socialist state. But in the present world context, under the impact of powerful forces, it can be given a new orientation and as a matter of fact it must allow itself to come increasingly under the influence of socialist thought, if it wants to remain true to its goal of complete independence.

I think it would be wrong to appraise Jawaharlalji's activities as those of an individual who is working to the end of establishing a socialist state and on this ground to criticise him adversely. Though he is a professed socialist, his activities are largely guided by ideals of democracy and economic betterment of the masses. He is not wedded to any particular 'ism' nor is he temperamentally fit to be the

leader of a group. He believes in some of the fundamental principles of scientific socialism, yet he is not prepared to swear by everything taught by Marx and Lenin. He does not subscribe to any rigid ideology. He considers himself free to examine the claims of every system of ideas which professes to serve the social purposes and he is always revising his ideas in the light of new experiences gained. He knows that objective situations are more powerful than theories. The history of the last twenty-five years has taught him that materialism is still a vital force and that every war gives an impetus to it even in unexpected quarters. He is impatient with those who mouth revolutionary phraseology, in season and out of season, and who always harp on the theme that the country is in the throes of revolution. He would not sacrifice the immediate possibilities for a doubtful future. Besides, his first flush of love for socialism has certainly received a check in recent years. It seems that recent world events have made him sober and cautious and the result is that he does not show that burning zeal of a young crusader which was visible in the years 1936-38.

He is thus not a sectarian. He is a man of faith but his faith is of a secular character and not supernatural. He has a scientific outlook and does not believe in metaphysics and mysticism. His approach towards political questions is, therefore, not religious or sentimental. Religion in its institutional form is repugnant to him as it is the bulwark of reaction and the defender of the *status quo*. Its function in society has been to make social inequalities less irksome to the lower classes. But he has no quarrel with that purer form of religious faith which inspires the conduct of individuals. He, however, believes in ethical social conduct and has a deep sense of human values. He has faith in ideals of social progress. He believes in planning life for democracy and freedom. He is against totalitarianism and wants to find an equation between individual liberty and planned economic order. He holds that the economic freedom for the masses is not possible without the common ownership of the means of production but that this end

should be achieved with as little sacrifice of personal freedom as possible.

It is as clear as broad day-light that if men are forced to make a choice between security and freedom they will choose economic security. Therefore, real liberty is not possible unless it can be accompanied by a sense of economic security. But this is not possible under the capitalist system. Yet there are some today who advocate free enterprise because in their opinion it is the only way in which freedom can be secured. They say that control over economic life would lead to enormous growth of bureaucratic spirit in the administration and would destroy personal liberty.

Pandit Nehru will not agree with these advocates of free enterprise. He would freely admit that planning is possible only through the state and its bureaucracy. He would further admit that coercive force will be necessary to enforce the decisions of the State. But he knows well that a capitalist economy would never solve the problem of mass unemployment and poverty. Anarchy in the sphere of production can only lead to anarchy in society. So he would try to check the evils of socialist planning by developing democratic techniques. It is likely that he may advocate mixed economy and encourage co-operatives, trade unions and public corporations to instil the democratic spirit. But there is no doubt that all his efforts will be directed to achieving both economic security and liberty. I know the problem bristles with difficulties and the very best minds are engaged in finding a solution. But the problem has to be solved if human values are to be preserved and real democratic way of life is to prevail.

As I have said above, Jawaharlalji does not belong to any orthodox school of socialism. But if I were asked to sum up his social philosophy in a neat phrase, I would say that it is "democratic socialism". Socialist ideals inspire his conduct because in his opinion they alone represent enduring human values and without these a full, free and co-operative life is not possible.

In India he would immediately scrap the feudal economy and abolish the class of intermediaries between the State and the tillers of the soil. But, for the present, he may remain satisfied with the socialisation of key industries, leaving an economic sector free for private enterprise, though here also he would like to impose certain State controls. He wants to provide decent, free and creative life for the masses in the largest possible measure. He believes that economic freedom for the masses is not possible without planning and in order to achieve this end he would put up with a measure of coercion by the State as a necessary evil. But he is essentially a democrat and will see that democracy is not smothered under any pretext. In the international sphere, he will work for an international order for the establishment of peace, freedom and progress. Such in short is the faith that inspires his thought and action.